Special Holiday Number

August

ROYAL

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£1000 *for* PICTURE PUZZLES

See Page 313.

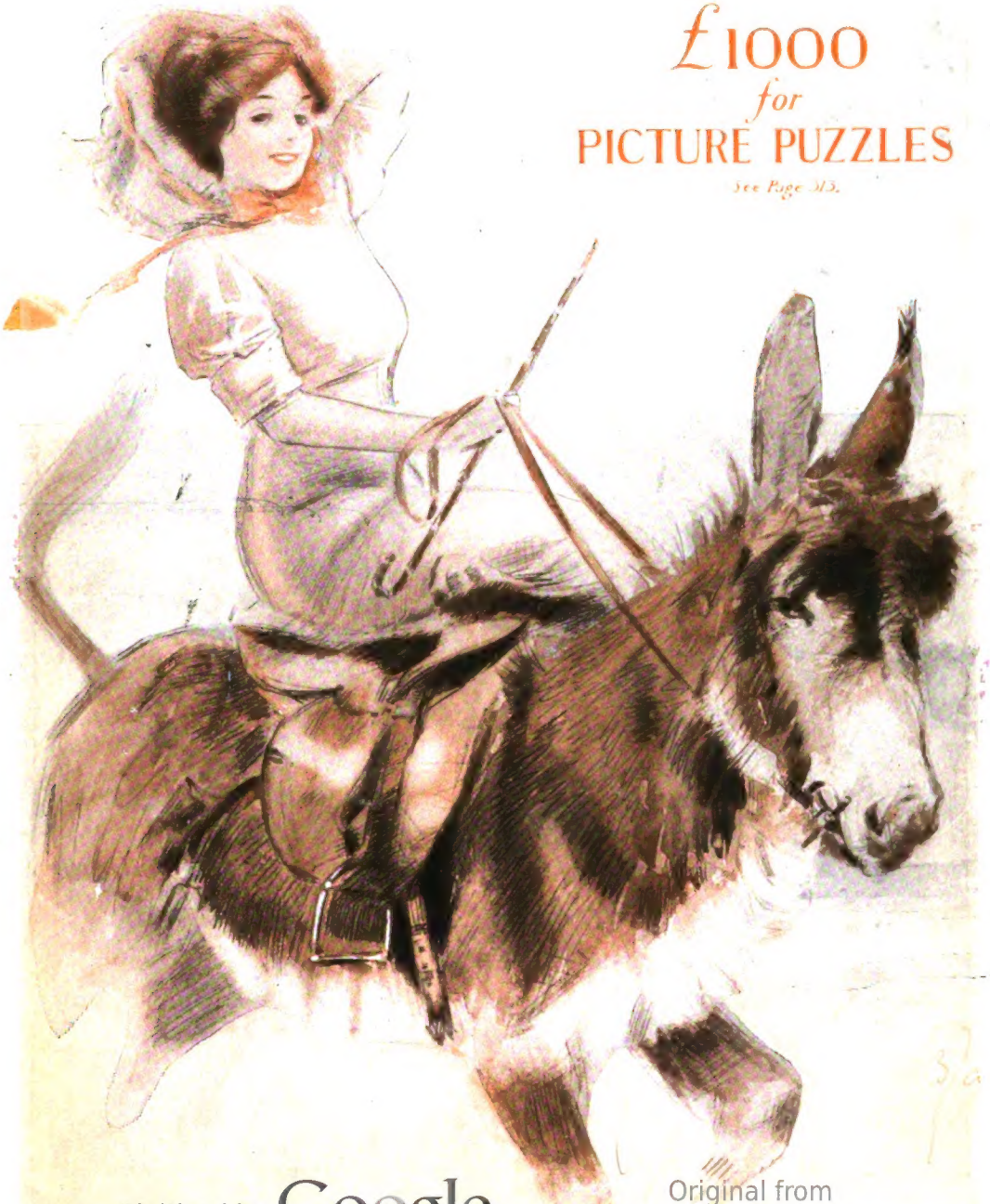

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Photo *H. W. Nicholls.*

They flung the little shutter open wide,
And glanced out coyly from the other side.
Glanced coyly—or with art that covers art;
Turning at length to gambol in the tide,
They took two phantom kisses—and my heart!

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"BRIGHT SUMMER."

From the Painting by Marcus Stone, R.A.

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Queens of Cinema

PORTRAITS OF POPULAR PICTURE-PLAYERS.

MISS PEGGY HYLAND.

A most vivacious young lady who considers life one huge joke is Miss Peggy Hyland, appearing in Weston-Finn films.

Scenario writing is her favourite pastime, and many of her ideas have been made into motion picture plays. Before she became a picture actress Miss Hyland was on the stage, her last engagement being with the "Yellow Jacket" Company.

Photo *Dover Street Studios.*

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MISS EDNA PAYNE.

Miss Payne, who is an exceptionally clever horsewoman, appeared in a Lubin film by way of an experiment, and was so delighted with the work that she accepted Mr. Lubin's offer of permanent employment at his studio.

"But it was terribly hard work at first," she confesses. "For the first few weeks I ached in every limb through riding over the rough hills."

Miss Payne has since appeared in a number of successful modern plays.

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MISS DOROTHY GISH.

A famous motion picture actress at the age of sixteen, and playing lead in some of America's greatest pictures—that is the proud record of Miss Dorothy Gish.

She was only fourteen years old when David W. Griffith, the highest salaried motion picture director in the world, gave her a part in a Biograph drama.

That was two years ago. To-day Miss Gish is playing lead in big Reliance productions under the direction of the man to whom she owes her first success.

Photo *E. Brunett.*

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MDLLE. STASIA NAPIERKOWSKA.

Chance gave Mdlle. Napierkowska her first real start as a dancer. She was fulfilling an engagement in a town where a Greek tragedy was about to be enacted. At the last minute the corps de ballet *failed to put in an appearance. Mdlle. Napierkowska offered her services, which were accepted, and scored a great success.*

She is an extremely busy mortal, for besides her work at the Paris Opera, she acts in many of Pathé's productions.

Photo *Bert.*

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MISS BETTY GRAY.

Miss Betty Gray owed her first engagement with the Biograph Company to the fact that she possesses a very beautiful head of hair.

A film was to be produced, entitled "The Bartered Crown," in which a girl sells her hair in order to provide money for an invalid sister. Miss Gray was allotted the part on account of her beautiful hair. She was then given a trial in a comedy film, and the result proved so satisfactory that she was made chief comedienne of the Biograph Stock Company.

Photo *White.*

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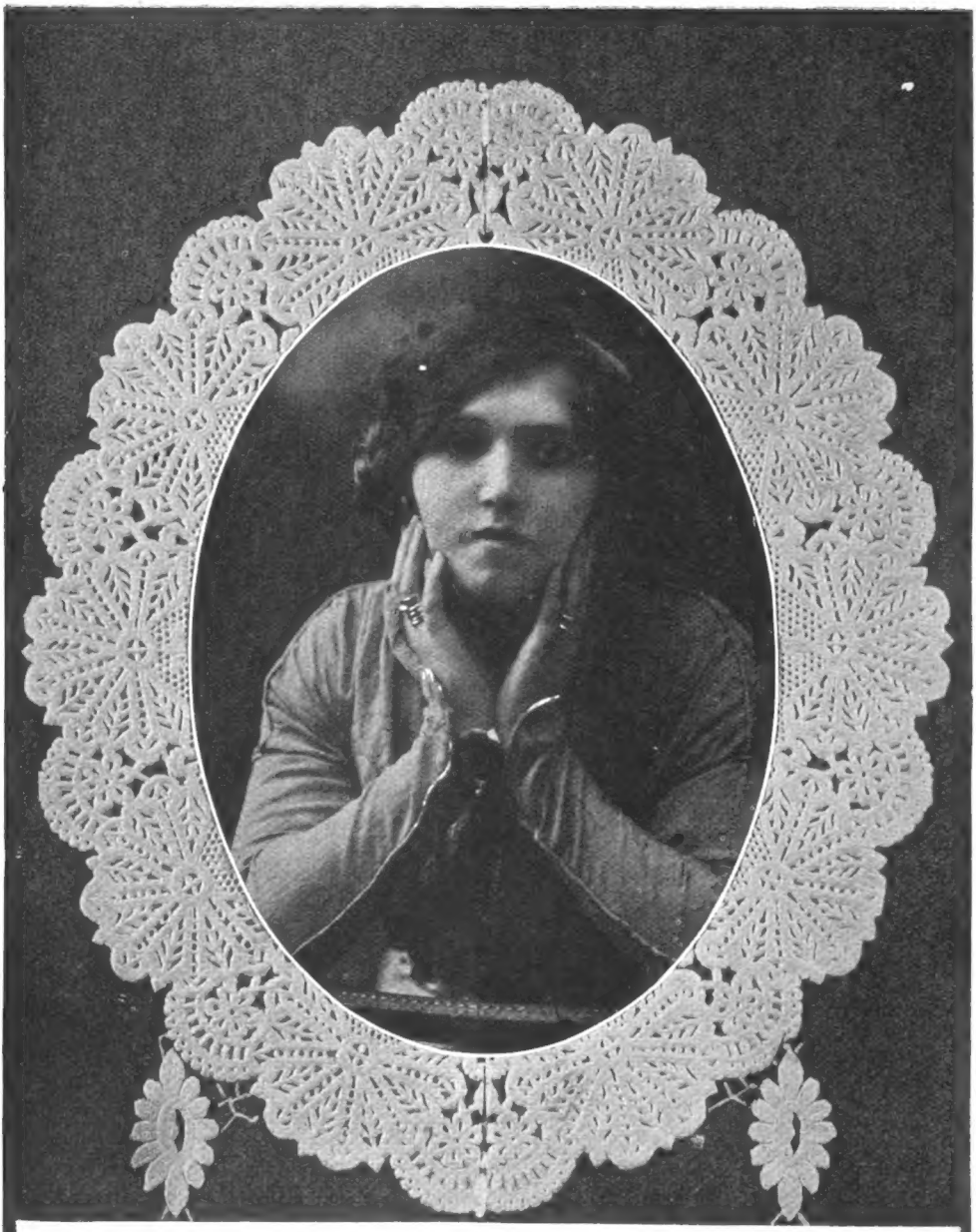

MISS IVY MONTFORT.

This clever actress, who now appears in Big Ben films, is an established favourite with the British public. For some years she was a B. and C. artist, and enacted important rôles in the "Lieutenant Daring," "Three-Fingered Kate," and "Don Q." series. Miss Montfort is known as the "Girl Without Fear," for she frequently performs hazardous feats before the camera. She is a magnificent all-round athlete, and can shoot, swim, fence, box, and ride a bucking broncho.

Photo *Adelphi Studios.*

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THE SECOND STORY OF A NEW SERIES.

The Amazing Adventures of Lady Hilda

II.—AN ORKNEY ODYSSEY.

By F. E. Baily.

Did you make Lady Hilda's acquaintance last month? If so, you will be longing to meet her again, for she is a fascinating character. This time she has a most exciting adventure in an aeroplane.

I.

"The sun of my rejoicing" (wrote Rudolf Merion from his flat in Pius Inn, W.C., to Hilda Glaive, the new and wonderful dancer, once Lady Hilda Risborough, staying at Folly Court, Oxfordshire), "is gone out in clouds of Cimmerian darkness. What is London without you, and who am I that I should survive your departure? Bond Street is a desert, Piccadilly a mockery. I look out and behold all the pussies of the Gaiety and Shaftesbury, and what are they to me? Let them be fried alive!

"Last night I laid three violets on the threshold of your forsaken dwelling in Sloane Street and crept away, knowing its glory had departed . . .

"Coming down to hard facts, my intelligent paper, *The Wire*, has proved a iive wire. I leave Aberdeen for Lerwick to-morrow in the saucy tug *Lord Provost*, fitted with temporary wireless and all kinds of things, and there I await the coming of you and your bird-man. So good-bye till we meet in the Shetlands, hoping you are well as this leaves me at present. Nevertheless, I am as anxious as an old woman about you, and this is going to be a fretful week for your—

"Rudolf."

Hilda read this letter thoughtfully, stretched upon a couch in the drawing-room of Folly Court, during that peaceful interlude before the next earliest person came down to dinner, and continued to look beautiful in the masterly gown of soft purple charmeuse that clung about her perfect body. She also reviewed the situation which to some extent gave rise to the letter.

Among the guests at Folly Court shone Gerald Hardy, inventor of a new and peculiarly stable aeroplane which no one would take up commercially.

Hilda, thirsting for new adventure—the world seemed vaguely flat and uninteresting because Rudolf Merion remained in town, a slave to sensational journalism—had persuaded him to make an advertising flight to Lerwick and take her as passenger.

"The winds round the north of Scotland are fearfully tricky. If we were to fly from here to the Shetlands it'd be rather an eye-opener," he had told her; and so it came about.

This, then, was the situation Hilda

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reviewed. She glanced over Merion's letter, dwelling on a phrase here and there, a little tender, reminiscent smile on her lips. Happy the man whose letter a beautiful girl reads twice!

"Dear old Rudolf!" she murmured gently, folding up the letter. "You're the best pal a girl ever had. I wish I could put my hands in yours, and not be restless any more, and—and settle down. If it's ever anyone it'll be you, but I don't think it ever will be anyone."

Then she blinked away two tears—the finest tribute a girl can pay any man.

II.

Just as it dawned on the Battle of Waterloo, so the sun rose to hera'd the day of Hilda's flight with Gerald Hardy. A motley crowd had gathered that fair July morning in the park surrounding Folly Court. Eccentrically dressed individuals, who turned out to be press-representatives, roamed near and far; depressed-looking personages trained reflex cameras on every object of interest from petrol-cans upwards. These were the photographers, a gruesome band. Every motorist in the neighbourhood had turned the nose of his car Folly Courtwards; George Hawkins, the host, palpitated hither and yon, suggesting, advising, flinging out a dramatic arm, taking this one and that urgently by the shoulder or coat-lapel.

At length all was ready. Hardy beckoned to Hilda, who climbed light-heartedly to her place in front of him. A mechanic swung round the propeller with wise hands, and the 100-h.p. engine burst into song. Hardy listened briefly, his head aslant; he waved his left hand to those who held back the machine.

"Let her go!"

They loosed her and she leapt forward, bumping over the grass; a cheer burst from the little crowd as she rose lightly, impalpably, and climbed up into the heavens. Soon she was a mere speck in the sky, and the pressmen, hastily engulfing a final whisky-and-soda, left to write up impressionist columns beginning, "I have just returned from Folly Court, Oxfordshire."

Straight as a die Hardy headed northwards; unseen humans on the distant earth followed the flight excitedly by means of glasses or special editions of the evening papers, but Gerald Hardy and his passenger ignored them, throbbing forward on their atmospheric way. In due season they climbed to 5,000 feet to swing well above the grey Cheviots, descending again to 3,000 feet above Scotland and bearing N.E.

At Montrose they landed; Hardy begged the hospitality of the Army flying-station for a swift inspection of his engine, all the difficulties being yet in front of him. The personnel joyfully lent him aid and entertained his fair passenger with military enthusiasm. Then up again into the impartial sky soared Hilda and her pilot.

Hardy went straight out over the sea, having no wish to struggle with air-currents and storms over the hilly north of Scotland. Already the weather had changed for the worse, bringing a cold, persistent rain. Far below a sudden wind capped the waves with foam, and as suddenly dropped. Then, swift, silent, impenetrable, fog swooped down, and all the world loomed a grey blank.

Hardy, cursing his luck, held on. He tried to rise above the mist, he tried to sink below it, but there was no escape.

From Aberdeen to Lerwick is about 250 miles—as the crow flies—say five hours' flight with luck. They had left Montrose over two hours and ought to be half-way to Lerwick, if only one could keep one's bearings in this infernal mist. He opened the throttle a shade more in an attempt to run quickly into clear weather.

At this point the engine began to misfire. They did not lack petrol; to the trained ear the precise quality of the explosions suggested ignition trouble. Perhaps moisture had found its way into the magneto, and caused a short circuit.

Hardy sighed. It was an unfortunate predicament for a pilot having a girl with whom he felt sure he was in love as passenger. Hardy's simple heart had become Hilda's long ere this.

The misfiring grew worse, the speed slackened, and the aeroplane commenced to descend.

Hilda's motorist's instinct caused her subconscious mind to realise that something ailed the engine.

"What's the matter?" she wrote on a pad.

"Don't know. Think it's the ignition. 'Fraid we must go down and try to keep afloat," scribbled Hardy in reply.

It was obvious that they would have to go down. Already he had begun a spiral *vol-plané*, switching on and off in the hope of stimulating the magneto to further activity.

Hilda said nothing. She knew their position must be desperate, but better drown quietly than embarrass the man at the wheel

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with useless and unprofitable questions or lamentations. The angry, foam-capped waves promised swift and certain destruction, although the biplane carried floats. Only an occasional sputter arose from the engine. Hilda hoped the finish would not take long when it came.

And then, just as she wondered what sort of a take-off for a leap into eternity one could get from a foundering biplane, sheer ahead loomed a stern and forbidding line of cliffs. Deadly calm, prepared to utilise the faintest shred of opportunity, Hardy called on the engine for the last time, and juggled with his elevating planes. The engine responded briefly, yet sufficiently.

They scraped over the cliffs with but two or three feet to spare, and landed on level ground a few hundred yards further without so much as a broken stay. Hardy glanced up at Hilda.

"Quite safe now. Hope you're not scared," he said. "Wonder if this is an Orkney or a Shetland, or simply dear old Scotland again. What filthy luck we've had, haven't we?"

The engine responded briefly, yet sufficiently. They scraped over the cliffs with but two or three feet to spare.

She smiled a rather wan and shaky smile, and he helped her to climb out. They hunted for two vacuum-flasks and a tin of biscuits, and for a little while confined their attention to hot soup and the crackling product of Reading.

"What do we do now?" inquired Hilda at last, brushing the crumbs from her attractive mouth.

Hardy inspected the fog, and shook his head. Lovesick boyishness had come back to him at the touch of earth beneath his feet.

"I really don't know, Miss Glaive," he began hesitatingly. "I'm awfully sorry. It's most frightfully awkward for you. There's not the faintest use trying to make a start in this mist, even if the engine were

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running properly. In any case we'll have to get the machine afloat before we can start her, because we've got no one to hold her back till the propeller gets up enough revs. a minute."

"Well, let's explore a bit," suggested the passenger. "It's just possible there may be a few inhabitants, and anyhow I want a walk to make me warm."

Ten yards or so ahead the ground declined. Hardy shoved the latest thing in biplanes down hill, and under the lea of a few boulders, for the sake of what shelter they afforded, flung Hilda's mackintosh rug over the more perishable portion of the power-unit, and then set off with her on a voyage of discovery.

As they progressed inland the fog thinned; after ten minutes' walking Hardy's trained eye picked out an object rising above the monotonous landscape, yet so in keeping with the prevailing dull grey hue as scarcely to be visible.

"That's a house over yonder," he exclaimed.

Hilda felt an exciting dream of desert-island existence vanish.

"Oh? Is it?" she replied in tones almost of disappointment. "So it is."

"Now we shall be able to find out where we are," went on Hardy, brightening rapidly. "I'll tinker up that magneto—I'm sure it's the magneto—as soon as this beastly fog lifts, and we shall make Lerwick in no time. Come on, Miss Glaive!"

They approached the house. It appeared to be a highly peculiar residence, built of corrugated iron on a stone foundation, situated in a small valley between the undulating cliffs and a line of hills behind it. The builder seemed to have desired his construction to attract no attention, for he had painted the corrugated iron to match the surroundings perfectly. This was not lost on Hardy.

"It's a d—er—a very funny set-out altogether!" he remarked. "Corrugated iron isn't the usual building material in these latitudes."

"Well," said Hilda, "let's knock up the eccentric householder, and see what he's like."

It was a remarkably simple structure—just a rectangular affair with a door in the middle, a window at either side, and without an upper storey. To knock up the householder was unnecessary. Of his own account he opened the door and came out.

They beheld a tall man, very well set-up and straight-shouldered, who wore a carefully trained moustache; the whole cut of him suggested someone accustomed to command. It was obvious that at the moment complete astonishment obsessed him.

Hilda at once took the lead. On land she dominated Hardy unchallenged.

"Good afternoon," she began pleasantly. "Could you tell us where we are, please?"

The tall man seemed to be shaken by profound emotion. One imagined him repeating mentally words which would have sounded strange to him in milder moments.

"Where—" he began—or at least it seemed so to Hilda. Then he broke off abruptly.

"I," he announced, "am Mr. Appleyard."

He said it almost fiercely, as if defying contradiction. There was something peculiar about his accent, for which the locality might account.

Hilda smiled again.

"How do you, Mr. Appleyard? My name is Hilda Glaive, and this is Mr. Hardy. We're trying to fly to Lerwick in the Shetlands, but we've lost our way in the fog, and developed engine trouble. Just as we'd given up all hope of escape from drowning, the cliffs"—she jerked her hand southwards—"loomed up, and we managed to land safely. Can you tell us where we are?"

Mr. Appleyard's astonishment evaporated.

"So? An aeroplane?" he repeated, as if glad to have an explanation of their presence. "This is private property," he added in a forbidding tone.

Gerald Hardy, with the precipitancy of youth, resented Mr. Appleyard's manner.

"Hang it, man!" he exclaimed, completely forgetting Hilda's presence, "we didn't want to come down in your beastly place. We should only be too pleased to leave it if we could!"

"You cannot leave it," retorted Mr. Appleyard with infinite superiority. "You are on an island—a small private island. There is no means of leaving. I live here because I am"—he paused for a moment—"a scientist," he concluded.

"Hush, Gerald!" interposed Hilda swiftly, and Hardy fell silent, wrapped in a cloud of glory at this use of his Christian name. "Of course," she went on to Mr. Appleyard, "we are awfully sorry to intrude, especially if you are conducting any important, or secret experiments——"

"Yes," broke in Mr. Appleyard with cold abruptness, "I am. Most important and secret. You must remain at the house till I make up my mind what is to be done."

Hilda became annoyed.

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"On the other hand," she proceeded with considerable chilliness, "it is not our fault we are here, and I hope you will do your best to meet the situation with—er—as much courtesy as possible."

Mr. Appleyard opened the door.

"You will come inside," he commanded.

Hilda looked at him.

"If you please," he added as an afterthought, and they followed him into the corrugated iron building.

The room into which he ushered them was of extraordinary bareness. It contained a plain wooden table and two or three chairs, one moderately comfortable and the rest quite uncompromising. A rack on the wall held a small armoury of rifles, guns, and pistols. On the mantelpiece were pipes and tobacco.

Plain shelves held a quantity of technical books, and on one wall hung an immense war-map. There was no other furniture.

"You will wait here," announced Mr. Appleyard. "No doubt you are cold. I will send you hot coffee. My servant does not speak English. I shall be back shortly."

"Do you mind telling me if this island is one of the Orkneys or the Shetlands?" inquired Hilda.

Mr. Appleyard hesitated.

"It is an Orkney island," he remarked at length, and, first bowing stiffly, went out.

If his two guests could have followed him, they would have received an unexpected shock and saved themselves much subsequent observation and putting together of two and two. He passed into the kitchen, where a smart young man in a grey livery—or could it be a uniform?—came stiffly to attention.

"You will serve the two individuals in the front room with hot coffee," rasped Mr. Appleyard in German.

"*Ja, Herr Major,*" replied the young man, saluting.

Mr. Appleyard returned, and entered the second front room, closing the door carefully behind him. This room was obviously a sleeping apartment. He strode across to a telephone by the camp-bed and put the receiver to his ear.

"Is that you, Captain von Essen?" he inquired, still speaking in German.

"Yes, *Herr Major,*" replied a voice from the further side of the hills behind Mr. Appleyard's house.

"Two English persons, a woman and a man, have arrived in an aeroplane," continued Mr. Appleyard. "They say they are flying to Lerwick in the Shetlands, and have lost their way owing to the fog. I believe it is a true story, though Heaven knows in what kind of aeroplane one would tempt the air-currents of this district. The man has no appearance of belonging to any service."

"*So!*" ejaculated the voice in astonishment.

"You will house the air-ship, and lower the disappearing-shed, and confine the men to quarters. I am not sure what we had best do with these intruders—let them proceed and drown themselves probably. If we are careful they will notice nothing. It is most unfortunate of course. I will come and see you later."

"Very good, *Herr Major.*"

Mr. Appleyard replaced the receiver. Of course, his real name was not Appleyard, but Apfelhof—Major Apfelhof, of the Prussian General Staff.

III.

The smart young man in grey from Mr. Appleyard's kitchen served coffee with wooden precision and departed. Gerald Hardy sipped his appreciatively, for it was good coffee. Hilda seemed ill at ease.

She put down her cup half empty, and began restlessly to roam about the room. First she turned to the weapons and ran an enquiring finger along the barrel of a rifle. It was carefully oiled and spotless. "*Mauser Waffenfabrik,*" she read aloud, glancing at the maker's name.

Next she inspected the library. Every volume seemed to be of a military, aeronautical, or geographical nature. Ninety per cent. of them were German, the remainder French.

She wandered across to the war-map; it showed the whole of Great Britain in minutest detail. The most infinitesimal villages were marked, while here and there tiny flags had been affixed, for the most part at such places as Portsmouth, the mouth of the Thames, and other strategical points.

Hilda returned to the mantelpiece and drank the remainder of her coffee, her mouth set in a firm line.

"Look here," she said at length, "who do you suppose that Appleyard man is, Gerald?"

Hardy tore his attention from his excellent coffee.

"Rum sort of blighter, isn't he? One of those fearfully clever chaps I should think. Look at all those stodgy foreign books with crackjaw names!"

Hilda snorted impatiently.

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"Really," she snapped, "I think you must have been brought up at a public school; you have so little imagination. Doesn't all this mystery suggest anything to you? Appleyard doesn't speak English as you and I do. His whole manner is very stiff and foreign; he has a foreign servant; he possesses foreign rifles and pistols—all those things over there are Mausers. He has an extensive military and scientific library in German. There is a war-map of England over there with careful markings on it. What is the conclusion?"

"I s'pose he must be a foreigner, then," replied Hardy casually.

"Is it difficult to get hold of one of these islands, do you know?"

"Oh, fairly easy, I think. A good many round the Scotch coast are let to private individuals."

Hilda fretted up and down the room, deep in thought.

"One could easily hide air-craft on this island, I suppose? Is there anything naval or military worth spying on in the neighbourhood?"

"Well," mused Hardy, looking regretfully at his empty cup, "the navy is always mucking about in Scapa Flow, and there's Rosyth not a long way off for a Zeppelin. But aren't you rather on the track of a mare's nest? I know Appleyard's a bit of a bear, but he must lead a devilish lonely life, and that wouldn't make him very sociable, would it? Anyhow, if the fog lifts, we'll leave first thing to-morrow morning."

At this point Mr. Appleyard returned. Compared with what it had been, his manner was distinctly cordial, and he oozed information from every pore. He was, it appeared, a scientist, deeply interested in the study of sea-birds and certain experiments to determine the susceptibility of Shetland ponies to the laws of heredity. He talked of Mendelian theories and other abstruse matters until his audience felt dizzy.

He offered them the hospitality of his house until the weather allowed them to depart. Hans, his faithful German servant, was even now preparing sleeping accommodation in an annexe to the building in which they sat. It consisted of two small apartments with a communicating door; he apologised for the Spartan furnishings, but—and he bowed to Hilda—it had not been designed for the service of charming ladies.

There was just one point. He must ask them not to wander into the valley on the farther side of the hills behind the house. If they did, the sea-birds nesting there would be disturbed, and certain cherished experiments of his would be ruined.

Mr. Appleyard that evening entirely won the heart of Gerald Hardy, and almost lulled Hilda's suspicions. He showed his guests three ravishing ponies in an adjacent stable, and presided genially over a surprisingly adequate meal. Afterwards he left them, saying he had to visit his assistant, who lived farther inland and helped in the observations connected with sea birds.

It was by then nine o'clock, and the strayed travellers, wearied by their perilous journey, begged to be excused for the night, and retired to the annexe. The two little rooms each held a camp-bed, and the inner one contained a portable looking-glass. The connecting door had a fastening on the inside, which obviously destined the inner room to Hilda. Stifling a yawn, she wished Hardy good-night, secured the door, and flung herself on the camp bed.

IV.

And then, as luck would have it, sleep became impossible because, from overfatigue or some other cause, her brain refused to "lie down."

Over and over again she lived through the events after their arrival on the island. Argue it as she might, her suspicions of Mr. Appleyard grew stronger and stronger. She felt sure he was not English; his later loving-kindness only intensified his previous chagrin and rudeness, and the military bearing of Hans, the servant, convinced her, in conjunction with the library and the armoury, that Mr. Appleyard and his retainer were soldiers.

Hilda sat up on the bed, sighed, and glanced at her wrist-watch. She saw by the light of a match that the time was eleven p.m. The tramp of Mr. Appleyard's returning feet had reached her quite an hour ago.

Hilda stood up, crossed to her window, and opened it noiselessly. She could not hear a sound, and there was not a light to be seen. The night showed pitch-dark, but a moon would shine later.

"I'll go and look at those sea-birds!" declared Hilda to herself.

Swiftly she struggled into the jacket of her waterproof tweed coat and skirt. From the right-hand pocket she took a medium-sized and exceedingly useful automatic pistol given her by Rudolf Merion, which she could use effectively and always carried on expeditions,

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and examined it carefully. Replacing it she climbed silently through the window—the annexe also had no upper storey—pulled down the sash till it reached within an inch of the frame, and glided away towards the mysterious valley.

The line of hills loomed what Hilda estimated at about half-a-mile away. It was rough going, and she had no landmarks to guide her. She tried to remember how to use her watch and the stars as a compass, in the manner that Rudolf Merion had once taught her, and failed.

The thought of the return journey bothered her most. Well, she would have to wait for the moon, that was all, and risk detection if anyone happened to be about.

Soon she struck a definite pathway, and followed it, every sense alert, her right hand gripping the pistol in her pocket. The path began to wind upward now and added caution became necessary. Hilda crept forward, holding her breath.

She was walking through a narrow pass between two hills, the level of which seemed midway between that of the hill-top and the valley. The path twisted abruptly, and commenced to descend. Hilda peered round cautiously.

She saw a narrow valley, between the line of low hills she had scaled and another similar row running parallel to them. This valley extended apparently the whole width of the island—perhaps a mile. At either end it had been closed by walls, the result being something like a colossal swimming-bath, a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide in the middle, tapering at the ends.

There was plenty of illumination in the valley, because a body of men, by the light of powerful acetylene lamps, were housing a Zeppelin airship.

Hilda watched them, fascinated. They wore the same grey kit as Mr. Appleyard's servant. There was no unnecessary noise or shouting of commands; every man seemed to know exactly what to do, and flung himself at his job with fiendish energy and precision.

Slowly the huge bulk was manœuvred into its shed. The doors were closed and every man stood clear. Someone gave a sharp command, and the shed began slowly to sink into the ground. As soon as it had disappeared, a fatigue party closed the gap in the earth with battens, much as sailors close a hatch, and flung shovelfuls of earth over the wood, until no stranger could have discovered its whereabouts.

Then the whole party fell in and marched off through a doorway in the hillside.

The foxes had gone to earth. Beyond one or two innocent-looking sheds, there was not a sign of anything unusual in the valley.

Hilda sat down in a heap literally gasping with amazement. Here was the solution of reported mysterious flights over the British Isles! A German airship docked within comparatively a few miles of the Scotch coast would make nothing of such feats.

This discovery explained Mr. Appleyard's annoyance at the arrival of Gerald Hardy and herself in the aeroplane. But for the fog they might have discovered the whole secret from the air, although what went on in the valley was quite invisible from the sea.

Then unreasoning terror overcame her. Already the moon had risen; she must return to the house near the shore lest anyone should discover her. There was an uncomfortable fear at the back of her mind that these determined men would stick at nothing to save their own skins.

Keeping in the shadow of any scrap of cover, slinking like a thief, her heart leaping at the rattle of a pebble beneath her feet, she covered the half-mile journey, crawled through her window and fastened it. With a sigh of relief she unbolted the communicating door, entered Hardy's room, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

He lay fully dressed on the camp-bed, fast asleep.

"Gerald! Gerald!" whispered Hilda, "wake up."

Hardy sprang to his feet in alarm.

"Hush!" she went on. "Listen!" and told him all.

At first he would not believe her. Then, convinced, he questioned her in excited undertones, lost in admiration at the ingenuity of these people.

"It's a clear night?" he demanded at length.

"Yes—yes—yes!" she replied impatiently. "Buck up—there's not a moment to lose! We must get away now—this instant. Remember, the engine isn't running, and you've got to put it right. It's half-past one now, and the nights are very short in these latitudes."

"I know," he said abruptly. "Come on."

Again Hilda slipped through the window. Hardy followed, and like two shadows they glided away. He was all on tenterhooks now for the safety of his biplane, and they

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approached with the caution of a surprise party lest it should be watched.

As they crept round the sheltering boulders behind which it stood, Hardy let out a furious exclamation: before his very eyes Mr. Appleyard was methodically running off the petrol.

In two strides Hardy had reached the machine and stopped the flow.

"What the blazes——" he began.

Mr. Appleyard sprang on him, but Hilda levelled her automatic pistol, to the astonishment of both men.

"Hands up—quick!" she snapped, and Mr. Appleyard obeyed, choking with rage.

"Tie him up," commanded Hilda. "Go on—belt, braces, anything. Remember the time, my dear man."

Hardy unwound a puttee, tied Mr. Appleyard's hands securely behind his back, and laid him face downwards on the ground. Then he bent the prisoner's knees, and secured his ankles to his hands. This is the most effective form of bondage yet discovered.

"If you make a sound, I'll shoot you," said Hilda to their late host. "Now, Gerald, get that engine ready."

Hardy was inspecting the petrol.

"We haven't enough to get to Lerwick, blank him!" he growled. "I expect Merion is searching for us in that tug, though. We must call him up by wireless."

He examined the magneto carefully, and discovered an easily remedied short circuit, made a lightning inspection of the engine, and turned to Hilda.

"There's a beach a hundred yards to the right. Help shove her down."

Hilda bent and stuffed his own handkerchief into Mr. Appleyard's mouth. Then between them they got the biplane into the water. The auxiliary floats were their salvation; a start on land was impossible without men to hold the machine back.

"You'll have to start her up!" commanded Hardy. "Twist the propeller so, and mind it doesn't hit you when she fires. Then climb up this way."

Hilda, turning to obey, heard a commotion in the locality of the fettered Mr. Appleyard; next she saw the grey-clad figure of Hans in the light of the coming dawn, running with a rifle in his hand. He had evidently missed them, and gone forth armed to investigate.

She swung the propeller fiercely. As the engine fired Hans flung himself down and took aim.

The machine taxied swiftly across the little bay towards the open sea. Just as she began to rise there came the *whack-k* of a service rifle, and Hardy shivered slightly. Then they were up and away out of reach.

"Thank God," exclaimed Hilda, and sank back in her place in front of Hardy. She had not seen him shiver.

A feature of the Hardy biplane was that, being exceedingly stable, it could be controlled easily with both hands free. Hardy had the wireless apparatus within his own reach. Now his right hand worked spasmodically but ceaselessly, flinging out a call to the tug, *Lord Provost*, and Rudolf Merion.

Hardy knew he could never reach the Shetlands unassisted. He knew also that he was shot in the left arm and bleeding steadily. He forgot that other Orkneys lay not far off, and pinned all his faith to the tug he felt would be searching for him. There remained petrol for another hour's flight. The rest lay with God.

Five minutes went by. Then the receiver crackled out a message of hope.

"Hullo! We are the *Lord Provost*. Are you Hardy? Hullo! Are you Hardy? Where are you? Where are you? Where . . .?"

"I've got 'em," murmured Hardy thickly. He glanced swiftly at his map, his compass, and gave their position as accurately as possible to the tug. She was, she said, eighty miles due north of them. Hardy opened the throttle.

"I've got petrol for sixty miles," he told the tug, "and a bullet in my left arm. You must do the odd twenty. You'll find us somewhere in the sea."

Then the wireless fell silent. Hardy was husbanding his strength.

Like a homing swift the biplane raced north. Hilda lay back contentedly, unaware of the risks.

Rudolf was coming to them. This boy behind her might be all very well, but Rudolf was a tried man. Now she knew she would be plucked alive from storm, tempest, and the King's enemies. Below lay a choppy sea. In the tank gurgled petrol for half-an-hour.

On roared the biplane. Hardy felt very drowsy. His left arm ached, and something red and sticky would trickle down his sleeve.

Presently from his lofty position he saw a faint smudge of smoke far ahead. The smudge and he neared one another till he could make out the squat lines of the tug. When she came within two miles of him the

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Mr. Appleyard sprang on him, but Hilda levelled her automatic pistol . . "Hands up—quick!" she snapped.

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petrol failed, and he planed down into a sea whose waves broke angrily over the floats of the biplane.

But Hardy was utterly done, and too exhausted to care.

V.

In the bow of the tug, staring through powerful binoculars, stood Rudolf Merion. For twelve hours and more—the twelve hours since Hardy had been long overdue—Merion suffered the tortures of the damned. Somewhere between Scotland and the Shetlands—either in the air above or in the waters under it, the one woman he adored flew triumphantly alive or floated ingloriously dead.

Finally he took out the tug in search of the lost, and after five hours' steaming picked up Hardy's message. That was an hour ago. Ever since Merion had swept sky and sea through his glasses.

A quarter of an hour since he picked up the biplane. Five minutes ago he saw her alight on the sea; now he was watching helplessly while the waves rapidly swamped the frail fabric, and the tug raced to the rescue at twenty knots an hour.

Would they be in time? Would they? Would they?

Only half-a-mile now—a quarter. Merion put down the glasses, flung off his coat, and unlaced his boots. The skipper slowed his engines so as not to overshoot the mark. Men stood by to lower a boat.

Hilda seemed to be holding Gerald Hardy beside her on a half-swamped float. Merion could see her pale, despairing face. Then that portion of the biplane remaining above water disappeared as the cleverly-handled tug glided almost alongside, and at the same instant Merion dived.

Hilda and Hardy were both swimmers, but he had fainted from loss of blood, and she was exhausted. Merion had her safe in a few strokes, but she shook him off.

"I can manage!" she gasped, and even as she spoke a lifebuoy from the tug hit the water beside her. "Dive for Gerald; he's fainted."

Pushing the lifebuoy into her hands he did as she told him, reappearing with Hardy a second later. The tug's boat salved all three. Dry clothes, comforts, and a doctor awaited them on board. He dressed Hardy's arm, and soon had him safely in a bunk. Hilda, after a change and food, seemed none the worse for her adventure, fatigue excepted.

She joined Merion on deck in half-an-hour. The tug made at full speed for the Scottish coast, and Hardy was sleeping safely below. Merion, secure from observation under the lee of the bridge, took both her hands in his.

"My dear!" he murmured passionately. "Thank God we were able to reach you in time."

"Thank *you* for saving my life, Rudolf," she answered, looking up at him with an oddly pathetic, affectionate glance. "I was about done when you grabbed me."

Then Merion's heart overflowed.

"Oh, Hilda!" he exclaimed beseechingly. "Can't you love me a little, and let me take care of you? I've tried to be good, and not worry you any more, but this has been an awful two days, and a man can't stand by and see his best-beloved quartering the globe for adventure and not want to be with her. Do you hate me so much, Hilda darling?"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I'd love to say yes, Rudolf, only I daren't. I'm so afraid. You're the only pal I have in the world, and if we were married, and you became commonplace to me, and I to you—why, life wouldn't be worth living any longer. Be my friend a little longer, Rudolf. Perhaps some day . . . who knows?"

"Very well, pretty lady," he assented with a wry smile.

"And now listen, please," she broke off swiftly. "I want to tell you how Gerald Hardy comes to have a bullet in his arm."

She told him in terse, vivid sentences. His eyes shone as he listened.

"We ought to be almost abreast of your island now!" he exclaimed, and swung himself up on to the bridge to consult the skipper.

Soon the tug's engines stopped, and she lay to opposite a dim smudge on the sky-line.

"The first destroyer flotilla is rendezvousing at Scapa Flow," Merion told Hilda gleefully. "I happen to know the man in command. We'll call him up with the wireless."

At dawn the next day two long, lean destroyers raced up out of the night, and Commander Hastings sent for Merion; they fetched him in a navy boat full of hearty bluejackets rowing navy-stroke.

He told his story; an hour later the commander, Merion, and an armed party landed on the beach Hilda and Gerald Hardy had left the day before.

Mr. Appleyard fully deserved the confidence reposed in him by his government. Commander Hastings found the ground in the valley somewhat disturbed in places,

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and a certain number of Mr. Appleyard's employees, whom he dressed in a plain grey livery, dwelling in little business-like huts. One saw no trace of any Zeppelin.

There was no green in the eye of Commander Hastings. His bluejackets investigated the *débris* in the valley, and discovered enough scraps to act upon.

The commander mustered the employees and ran his eye over them.

"I congratulate you on the physique of your chaps, Mr. Appleyard," he observed dryly.

Commander Hastings possessed a well-stored memory.

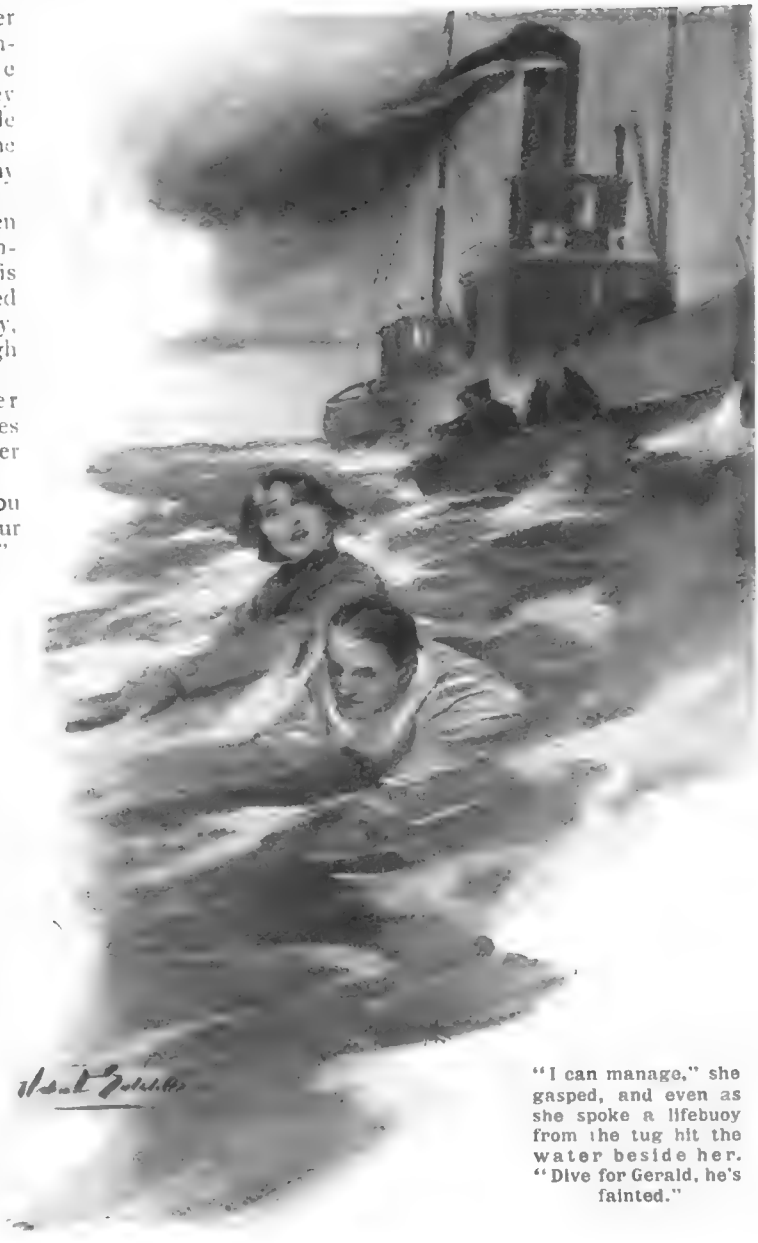
"'There are the ships,'" he quoted, pointing to his destroyers, "'and there is that leviathan'—or all that's left of it."

He indicated the grave of the Zeppelin.

"Your tenancy of this island ends now. You'd better write home for a ship to take you away. We'll stay and see you off."

Except for a confidential report to the Admiralty the incident ended there. Nevertheless, they gave Gerald Hardy a contract for fifty biplanes in recognition of his services, and the excellence of his craft.

After lunching with Commander Hastings Hilda went home with Merion in the tug. Hardy left them on landing and they journeyed together up to town.



"I can manage," she gasped, and even as she spoke a lifebuoy from the tug hit the water beside her. "Dive for Gerald, he's fainted."

The following night Rudolf dined at Hilda's flat in Sloane Street. He had missed a scoop owing to Hardy's uncompleted flight and an Admiralty veto, but there was no trace of disappointment on his face as, in the good red wine of Burgundy, they drank to the damnation of Mr. Appleyard.

(Another Adventure of Lady Hilda next month.)

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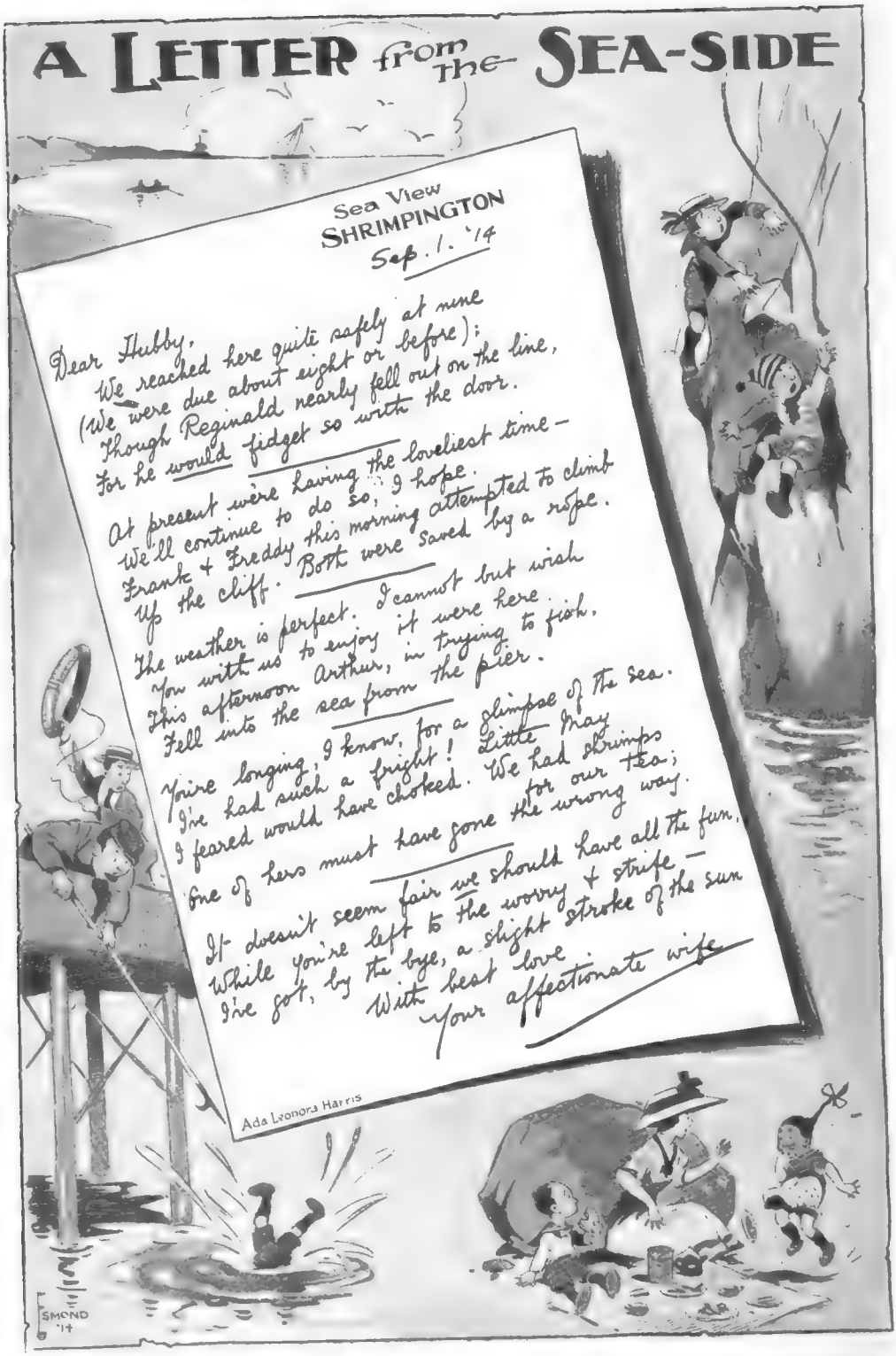
A LETTER from the SEA-SIDE
Sea View
SHRIMPINGTON
Sep. 1. '14
Dear Hubby,
We reached here quite safely at nine
(We were due about eight or before);
Though Reginald nearly fell out on the line,
For he would fidget so with the door.
At present we're having the loveliest time —
We'll continue to do so, I hope.
Frank + Freddy this morning attempted to climb
Up the cliff. Both were saved by a rope.
The weather is perfect. I cannot but wish
You with us to enjoy it were here.
This afternoon Arthur, in trying to fish,
Fell into the sea from the pier.
You're longing, I know, for a glimpse of the sea.
I've had such a fright! Little May
I feared would have choked. We had shrimps for our tea;
One of hers must have gone the wrong way.
It doesn't seem fair we should have all the fun,
While you're left to the worry + strife —
I've got, by the bye, a slight stroke of the sun
With best love
Your affectionate wife
Ada Leonora Harris
SMOND '14

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£1000 IN PRIZES.

GREAT NEW PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

THE EDITOR OF THE ROYAL MAGAZINE is giving away the most colossal sum ever offered to the readers of a monthly magazine—no less than £1000 (one thousand pounds) in prizes for a simple competition.

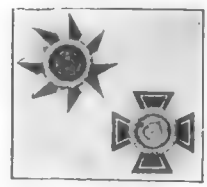
On the following page you will find a set of twelve pictures representing the names of railway stations which have been selected by the Editor, and further sets of pictures will appear monthly in THE ROYAL MAGAZINE. (The first twelve pictures appeared in the July number, copies of which may be obtained through any newsagent.) The big cash prizes are offered to the readers who discover the names of the railway stations represented.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Competitors are required to write clearly in ink beneath each picture the name of the station they believe it represents, fill in their names and addresses in the space provided, cut out the page, and keep it until further instructions appear in THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

First look at the example. You will see that the picture shows a star and a cross. The correct answer is STARCROSS.

EXAMPLE.



STARCROSS.

A PRIZE OF £500

will be awarded to the competitor from whom we receive a complete set of pictures with all the names correct.

Prizes of £200, £100, and £50, . . .
Ten £5 Pathephones (with records), and
One Hundred Prizes of £1 each . .

will be awarded to the competitors who send in respectively the next most correct lists.

READ THESE CONDITIONS CAREFULLY.

1. Write the name of each station clearly in ink. One name only is allowed under each picture.
2. No alterations may be made in the names. If you have made a mistake, cross out the word and write it afresh. When you have filled up your list cut it out and keep it till we tell you what to do with it.
3. Competitors may send in as many complete series of pictures as they please, but each complete series will be judged independently. Sets must be fastened together in the top left-hand corner.
4. The prize of £500 will be paid to the competitor from whom the Editor receives a complete series of pictures with all the names correct of the actual stations as represented. If no competitor sends in a correct list the prize of £500 will go to the sender of the most nearly correct list. In the event of ties the prizes will be divided.
5. The Editor of the ROYAL will not be responsible for the loss or non-delivery of any attempt, and proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of receipt or delivery.
6. No member of the staff of the ROYAL MAGAZINE may enter for this competition.
7. Only the names of railway stations found in Pearson's List of Railway Stations will be admitted. This list is obtainable for 3d. through any newsagent or bookstall, or it will be sent post free for three penny stamps by The Publisher, Room 24, THE ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.
8. Competitors must agree to abide by these conditions, and the Editor's decision is in every respect final.

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THIRD SET OF PICTURE PUZZLES (Nos. 13—24).

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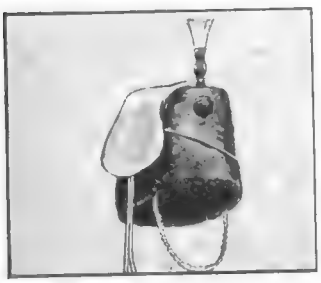

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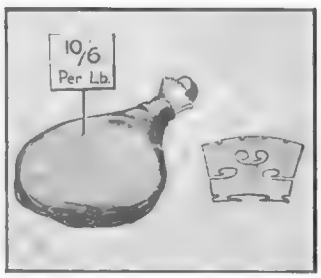

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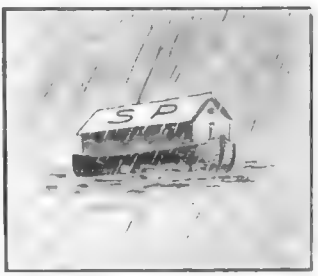

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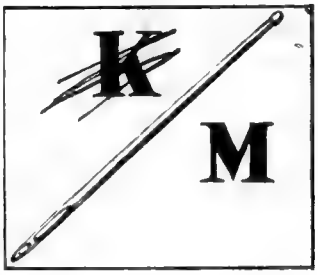

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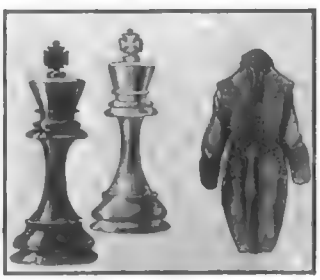

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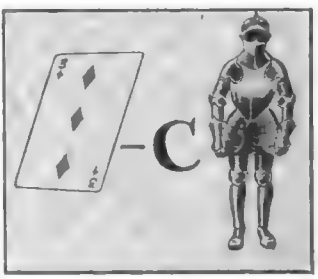

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Her BACK To The WALL

By Coningsby Dawson.

A vivid human interest story concerning a young married woman who thought she was losing her husband's love, and telling in an enthralling manner how she regained it.

I.

The auburn-haired girl was at the piano. Above her head a lamp, the only light in the room, lit up the ivory of her rapid hands. There was a touch of mystery about her, a sombre passion, a concealed pathos, which hinted at an eager personality that clamoured vainly to be expressed.

She was playing her heart out in a storm of sound. That was like Birrel, to be indiscreet in every way save with her mouth. Aline, as she listened, wondered that her husband hadn't noticed—noticed anything. Perhaps he had. Both of them were waiting for him. The one betrayed impatience by excitement, the other by silence and repression.

Aline sat crouched before the fire in a low, deep-seated chair. One foot was tucked under her. You would have had to look twice to discover her presence, and then a third time to make certain that she was not a child. She had a child's knack of making herself seem tiny by cuddling herself up.

Her hands, feet, face, everything about her were small and fragile; you only saw that she was almost tall when she stood up. Her brown-black hair went about her forehead in a swirl, so that some of it tumbled over and drifted in front of her grey eyes. In contrast to Birrel she was mist and dusk—almost disembodied as she sat hemmed in by shadows.

Inch by inch she had retreated before the truth; she could retreat no further. Her back was to the wall. Her husband was disappointed in her. He employed the old tendernesses, the old endearments. He still caught at her hands, calling them "little white mice." He still watched her throat for the fluttering of the captive "emotion-bird." But he invented no new ways of loving.

She wasn't spectacular like Birrel; she couldn't play the piano, couldn't bandy words with smart insincerity. Her sole art lay in being tender.

The auburn-haired girl broke off abruptly. She realised she had been saying things in music that ought not to be said. She swung round with jealous generosity and spoke huskily.

"Aline, you're the luckiest kiddy in the world."

Aline crouched lower in her chair. Her face, curiously immature in sadness, drooped over the back of her hand. Across the quiet Birrel surveyed her.

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"You're the luckiest kiddy in the world," she repeated. "D'you know why? Or can't you guess?"

Aline sat very still, like a Greuze portrait of waking girlhood, sad with the satiety of youth and wistful with foreknowledge of the interminable journey.

At last she answered.

"I married Dan You mean that?"

Birrel switched off the lamp and came slowly through the darkness to where the fire-light spilt over in a quivering semi-circle.

"It must be wonderful to be married to Dan," she said. She waited for a reply. When none came, she continued: "He never looked at any of us girls. You were the first. Yes, really. And yet— You know, we were all in love with him."

The smothered laugh told Aline much more than the words. She slipped her arm shyly about the tall girl's neck, finding comfort in giving comfort when she felt the need of sympathy herself.

"No one could help loving him," she whispered. "But you—you're so beautiful, Birrel. You have such lovely hair. He's so fond of music, and you—I've often wondered."

She raised her eyes from looking in the fire and asked a strange question—one which a wife of a year's standing ought certainly to have been able to answer for herself.

"Birrel, why did he marry me?"

A pause, during which one woman searched for the meaning that hid behind the other woman's question.

"I think," she said, speaking slowly, "because you were good. You know, dear, so few of us are good in your sense. We want so much; it takes such a little to give you pleasure. We're—we're social pirates—we ransack everybody for what we think we must have."

Her voice sank.

"I'm not sure that you ought to have me here, knowing—knowing what you must know now."

Aline drew herself up—a child on the defensive. "I'm not frightened of——"

The answer came cynically. "Wives never are until— I'm going. No, let me go before Dan——"

She slipped into her furs. "I can see myself out."

At the door she turned. "I don't think I ought to come back."

Aline kissed her.

She re-entered the darkened room, crossed it, and drew aside the curtain. Yes, it was beautiful, in its frightening, Titanic fashion.

Built up against the sky, like ramparts tipped with stars, were the tunnelled precipices in whose caves and crevices human cheese-mites encountered birth and death. She felt unknown, stunned, terrified by too much daring. It was as though they had all conspired to force heaven further from earth, and to shut her out.

While Dan had loved her— And he still loved her—she was sure of that; only they had lost their points of contact. She was desperate to win him back. But how—how?

Outside the lift halted. She heard him in the hall, removing his hat and coat. The door opened. He stood on the threshold puzzled by the darkness and stillness. He reached out his hand; the room was flooded with a dazzling glare.

"Oh don't—don't do that." It was as though the light stripped her thoughts of concealment and made them shameless.

He turned quickly to the window, startled at the sound.

"Why, youngster, how you scared me! I wondered what had happened. Thought Birrel was to be here, and we were to have some music."

She stood with her hands clasped against her throat.

"Oh, please turn it out."

He watched her curiously, taken aback by the hint of hysteria in what she said. He noticed how she seemed to shrink from him, like mist and dusk, looking vague and tremulous. And he remembered how, not so long ago, she had been quick to run to him with a girl's glad boldness. He longed, with a man's resentful longing, to make the old trustful confidence return. In what way had he wronged her?

And she watched him — tall, broad-shouldered, and slight of hip in his evening dress. She watched his face—extraordinarily sensitive for a man's, arched at the nostrils, square in the forehead, and as finely moulded as a woman's about the mouth.

Was it only fancy? Had his face grown stern? It seemed to her that he was less young, that the sense of power was stealing his youth from him: that he didn't laugh like he used. He was remote even when he was near her—his thoughts were elsewhere. She couldn't follow them.

"Please turn it out."

He switched off the light. In the darkness

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he caught her to him, at first powerfully, then gently, made careful by her girlish slightness.

"Little one," he whispered, "you're trembling. What's happened?"

She wanted to tell him, had tried to tell him many days; now that the opportunity had come, she only pressed her forehead against his shoulder and wept.

He drew the curtains together. A little apart from him in the darkness she stood ghostlike.

A protective tenderness awoke in him—a renaissance of his first passion for her, when passion was untested. In an instant he had picked her up and swept her off her feet. His lips met hers with the silent eagerness of days when such greetings were new and at times resisted. She lay in his arms very small and quiet. When he sat down before the fire, he was still holding her.

He played with her hands, folding and unfolding the slender fingers in that sweet embarrassment that men share with children when they love a woman beyond the reach of words. She almost believed that his actions were not the outcome of habit—that her fears had been imagined; that there had never been any danger of her losing him.

She sat up, her hands on his shoulders, holding him from her. It had to be said.

"Dan, why did you marry me?"

The question chilled and crushed him. In common with most married men, there had been times when he had asked himself that question. But always he had pushed the answer contemptuously from him, forcing himself back under the spell of her gentleness.

He answered coldly. She knew that he was hurt; it was as though she had accused him.

"You oughtn't to have to ask. You know—because I loved you better than any woman in the world."

He did not kiss her as he said it. His arms were slack about her—they simply rested; they had no gladness. Her voice trembled.

"Did you love me? Or did you love someone you thought I was, or thought I might become? No, listen, Dan. Don't be cross. I'm not accusing; I'm just trying to find out.

"Perhaps all men and women who love one another—perhaps they all take each other for granted when they're married. Perhaps—I don't know; but I can't bear it. We used to be so near—so anxious to be alone and happy. And now—why, we try to escape to people; we're afraid of tiring each other. And we're hungry. It wasn't me you loved; it was——"

He seized her hands fiercely—the "little white mice hands"—and raised them to his lips.

"Aline, won't you believe that you were the first—the only woman? There was no one before you."

She ruffled his hair.

"Poor Dan! That wasn't what I meant. It was wonderful that I should have been the first, but—that's the trouble. You know nothing about women. If you'd loved before, you'd have learnt; a woman likes to be loved for what she is; not for the magic cloak that a man flings round her. He's simply loving himself then.

"You tried to think I was clever; I'm not—I can't make music for you like Birrel. And then, even when you began to suspect, you wanted to believe that you could alter me into your ideal, as a woman alters a dress. You can't, Dan. You used to tell me that I'd never had anyone to call out my big qualities. I never had any big qualities—I'm just ordinary. And yet—I think you'd like me, if you'd only find out who I am. You're disappointed."

"I'm not." He lied stubbornly.

She slipped to the floor, her head against his knees.

"You are. Oh, I know it. Don't let's pretend. All these months you've refused to own it. I've tried—tried so hard to alter myself. I'm what I am."

She was crying with a child's abandon. He plucked at her fingers, striving to make her look up at him.

"Listen." He spoke chokingly. "We'll go back to France, to Amboise for a holiday. It was there that we first learnt to love one another. We always meant to go. We'll go and see the old man who makes *sabots*. You remember? It was after we'd been talking with him that I kissed you first. And we'll climb up to the *château* and watch the sunset. We'll do all the things we used to do together. And then——"

"And then?" She looked up at him searchingly.

"And then, we'll forget London and all that it's done for us. We'll be together."

"Not together." She said it sadly. "That wouldn't do it. Your work's here. We've got to live here. It's here that we must fight it out. Oh, dearest, it was good of you—But you'd only fool yourself afresh. Just because the country was different, you'd think I was different. It would solve nothing."

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He knew it. France and the holiday spirit would throw over her the old cloak of glamour—there would always be the return.

"Won't you try, Aline——?"

She finished his sentence for him. "To be someone else?" She shook her head. "No. I'm so tired of pretending. Good-night, Dan. You don't like me now. You see, I'm not what you intended. I wish you'd learnt something about women before you married me. Perhaps you wouldn't have been so disappointed in me then."

Left by himself, he felt angry and sorry. Until he had met her he had never given a thought to any woman. And all the while, even before he had known his wife, he had had her in mind, working with the idea that she would share his success. Somehow Aline had failed him. Had he asked too much? He had always pictured his wife as a woman of accomplishments. He had imagined her at the piano. But Aline——

And his girl-wife stood desperately with her back to the wall in a bedroom not far distant. She had given herself to him too ungrudgingly. There was one way left to re-win his love—he must be thwarted. At whatever cost, he must be taught about women—made to know the worth of simple goodness and affection.

II.

From that night began their new treatment of one another. They became careful-mouthed in speech. Gradually, without giving notice, they began to arrange their lives individually and to make their separate plans. He would arrive home and find her absent. She never offered him any explanation of her new interests.

Several afternoons in one week he telephoned to her from the office out of curiosity; each time he was answered by a servant. He had no idea where she went—theatres, perhaps—he supposed by herself. He had to be content with supposing, because he feared that inquiring would lead to reciprocity of questions and answers, and——

Two days after his conversation with Aline he returned home to find Birrel waiting for him. She was in evening dress and had taken off her wraps.

"Good luck? I didn't expect to see you. Going out to dinner?"

She raised her eyebrows in a puzzled manner. "Going out to dinner! Why, no. Aline asked me to dine here; but——"

He glanced round, annoyed and embarrassed.

"Where is she? Hasn't she come in yet?"

His eye fell on a note, placed conspicuously against the clock on the mantelpiece. It was addressed to him in his wife's hand. It read:

"*I've invited Birrel to dinner. I may not get back before eleven. If I don't, please entertain her for me.*"

They waited till half-past seven and then sat down without her. At first Dan was anxious; he spent his time in listening for his wife's step. He hardly heard anything of what Birrel said. Then his anxiety was replaced by a sense of anger at her injustice. She hadn't any right to treat him cavalierly. It was so unlike her. Besides, much as he hated to own it, he missed her most confoundedly. Then came the child's desire to show how little he cared. If she could have a good time without him, he wasn't going to allow himself to be miserable.

He looked at Birrel—and saw her for the first time as a woman, not as a comrade. He glanced into her eyes, and discovered that he could make them shy if he gazed too long at them.

He became interested in the discovery—a little proud of it; he was like a piper with a knack of magic, seated on the edge of a green wood, compelling wild things to steal out from cover spellbound by his tunes. That was how it all commenced.

After dinner, she seated herself at the piano, singing, humming, wandering like a bee from flower to flower of sound.

His thoughts went back to the woman of dreams as his illusions had conjured her. He pushed his chair nearer to the auburn-haired girl. At the end of a piece he leant forward and stayed her hands. He had intended to ask her to repeat it. As their fingers met, they lingered. Hers trembled. What had he been going to say? Their eyes came together.

"You're not happy?"

Her voice quivered.

"And you?"

He shook his head.

She bent forward. Her hair touched his. He caught its fragrance. She breathed, hardly spoke the words:

"Can't I help?"

He awoke to the risk of his foolishness.

"It's too late for that."

She laughed tremulously.

"It's never too late to—flirt."

Her hands flashed above the keyboard in a growing riot of passion.

He glanced at the clock nervously.

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At the end of the piece he leant forward and stayed her hands. . . . As their fingers met, they lingered. Hers trembled.

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"Aline said she'd be home at eleven."

It was a quarter to eleven now. Birrel rose quickly, without explanation, as though her action would be understood.

"Then I'll be going."

When his wife came in, she found him by himself, seated before the fire engrossed in a book.

He glanced up.

"Had a good time?"

"Splendid, thank you."

That was all. She volunteered no account.

She had become unapproachable. In the days that followed she seemed less a woman than a figure of mist and dusk, drifting in and out of his rooms, elusive and unresponsive. He suffered intensely because to all appearances she was so contented.

Now that she had withdrawn herself from him, he desired her with a hunger of which at the time, when he had fancied himself disappointed, he would never have thought himself capable. He made efforts to ignore their estrangement and to act as though life was on the old comfortable footing. He rang her up from the office.

"Hullo! Is that you, Aline? I've got two tickets to-night for Shaw's new play. Let's meet for dinner at the Savoy. What's that?"

A ghostly voice answered him with conventional politeness.

"I'm awfully sorry. I can't come. You see, I have a previous engagement— No. It's impossible to break it."

He slammed the receiver down and tore up the tickets.

Three weeks had passed and there had been no sign of a reconciliation. It was towards the evening. He was riding in the Park. On account of the lateness of the hour the bridle-track was almost deserted.

He must be getting back. This might be one of the evenings when Aline would be at home for dinner. He was about to shake his horse into a gallop, when he saw a woman-rider coming towards him at a canter. He drew rein to watch her; her erectness, her vitality, the lithe swaying of her body took his fancy. She went by him in a flash. He saw her face, hesitated, and then called her name. She took no notice.

Swinging his horse round, he set off in pursuit. The speed, the darkness, the quiet roused him into excitement. He was doing something as old as creation, something man had begun to do the moment he was fashioned—a thing which the more natural part of mankind still delighted in doing.

For the moment his pursuit became symbolic of the love-chase, the greatest of all games, played according to the same lawless rules by men of Nineveh and modern London. The thud of hoofs quickened his blood to riot. He forgot all standards and hesitations; the race was on—he must get to her.

In the far distance, growing rapidly nearer, the high wall of flats, riddled with a thousand golden eyes, rose up to bar her progress. Behind one of those windows, quite probably, his wife waited.

Drawing level with the girl rider, he laid his hand on her arm.

"Birrel!"

She flung him a challenging smile and tapped him lightly on the shoulder. She must have known that it was he who was following; she showed no surprise. Urging her horse to a faster pace, they rode knee to knee through the silence.

At the bottom of the ride they reined in to breathe their horses. She turned to him with eyes half-closed and mouth pouting with devilment.

"So we meet again, in spite of—in spite of what I said about flirting!"

He laughed shortly.

"What you said about flirting! Why in spite of it? Perhaps, because of it. But what are you doing here?"

She looked at him steadily, brushing the hair from her eyes. He waited. At last she answered.

"I came to be lonely."

He lowered his voice and leant out of the saddle towards her.

"That doesn't sound like you, Birrel. Why did you want to be lonely? No. Don't shake your head. Be friends and tell me."

He covered her hand with his own, repeating: "Tell me."

She fidgetted, half-withdrew her hand, then thought better of it.

"If you must know, because I couldn't be with you."

His success exceeded his expectations and blunted his appetite for daring.

"Ah, yes, I've been horribly busy lately."

"And Aline?" she inquired archly. "Has she been horribly busy, too?"

It was her way of speaking that told him—she had guessed everything. In a few words he confirmed her conjectures and left the road open.

"Nowadays Aline's always busy, as far as I am concerned."

She turned her face into the shadows,

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away from him, and pressed his hand gently.

"Poor Dan. I knew it."

They understood one another. Walking their horses, they travelled close together, conversing in low voices.

Time and again, when streets flamed saffron before them, they turned to the charitable shelter of the Park, where night was unrevealing and more spacious. At last, loth to separate, they emerged at the Knightsbridge entrance.

They halted, uncertain. "D'you often ride so late?" he asked.

She was quick to take up his meaning. "Sometimes. Yes—usually."

He stumbled over his words. "Don't you think—Couldn't we do it again?"

She gazed into his eyes, steadily and shyly, yet undisconcerted.

"I should like to."

He grew bolder at parting.

"To-morrow, perhaps?"

She laughed outright.

"Perhaps—and not perhaps. Ring me up to-morrow afternoon."

He watched her ride away into the vivid thoroughfare, with the shield of night spread over her, dull as gun-metal, studded with lamps for gleaming jewels. On the point of vanishing, she turned; he thought she waved to him. The traffic stretched out greedily and clutched her from his view.

It wasn't too late to turn back. If only he could show his real self to Aline and discover the real self in her, as she had implored him, their life might recapture its old glory.

In the hall of his flat he surprised her on the point of departure. Without hesitating, he put his arm about her shoulders and felt them leap under him. "Aline, don't go. I'm sorry. Take those things off. Let's spend the evening together."

Her eyes became fugitive—the eyes of a wild thing trapped.

"I've—I've got to go." She shuddered; her voice was low and desperate.

He tried to draw her to him; she resisted and huddled beneath his arm with her face averted. His speech became thick and tense in its earnestness.

"There are things we must talk about—things that have made us both wretched."

She stood free of him, quivering and determined. "I know—I know—if you'd spoken earlier—but I'm expected."

Where was she expected, and by whom? His jealousy was roused. He noticed that she carried something rolled up behind her muff and concealed by it. Before he could ask any question she had slipped out.

Sitting by the fire waiting for her return, he tried to read a book, but it was Aline, always Aline, that he saw before him. When her footstep at last sounded in the passage, he was so unnerved that he scarcely dared trust himself to rise.

The door opened. He laid aside his reading with a pretence at leisureliness. He had frightened her before by his ardour; now he meant to reassure her by appearing calm and collected. She leant across the threshold, her chin snuggled against the furs that went about her throat, her face adorable in its smallness, her eyes fluttering. He took a step towards her.

Hastily she drew back, pulling the door after her.

"I only—only came to tell you that I'm home—and I'm tired. I'm going straight to bed."

The door closed. Swiftly he crossed the room, calling to her: "Oh, Aline—one minute."

Either she had not heard or was unwilling to attend. He waited doubtfully, hoping for her return; then went back to his chair.

Next afternoon he telephoned Birrel. He unhooked the receiver and replaced it three times before he did it. But he did do it that afternoon, and the next, and the next.

III.

By riding in the Park after nightfall, they had invented a new indiscretion in the least discreet of cities. Its novelty quickened their zest for adventure. Within gunshot of Piccadilly they could be as solitary as Bedouins in an Egyptian desert.

Aline's name was often on their lips. That they should speak of her threw over their conversation the appearance of propriety. He made his heart a museum—a public place for Birrel to walk through. Every hour that he was in her company, the memory of Aline followed.

Once, when he was speaking of Amboise, she said: "I should like to go there—just you and I together. I wonder if we shall ever——"

Then she caught the quick hardening of his expression, and felt herself a leper, forbidden the sanctuary, only permitted to view the high altar through a crack in the wall which his unhappiness had made for her.

In loving her, he was loving Aline by proxy. Should Aline lift an eyelash in encouragement, her reign would be over

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She knew it. She was determined that a time should come when——

And it came. On a moonlit canter her hair shook free from its fastenings and fell gleaming like a golden snake across her shoulders. He begged her to let him help her bind it.

As his fingers sank into its silky meshes, he began to tremble. The words he was speaking trailed off into nonsense; he could hear himself repeating them over and over, and knew that it was not to the words that she listened.

He ceased speaking. Then he heard it too—passion, which he had tantalised, alternately starved and nurtured. In his temples, galloping throughout his body, the hoofs of the pursuer pounded. Compelled, almost against his will, he bent over her. Their lips met; their hearts stood still. In spite of its forbiddenness, perhaps because of it, the moment held a sacred awfulness. From that night it was she who did the retreating—he the advancing.

Winter wore itself out. Spring was born in the cradle of the tree-tops, stared wide-eyed for a day at travelling clouds, then clambered down and ran laughing, with hands full of flowers, through the stone-paved city.

Days lengthened. The Park was no longer charitable. Night, like a host who opens his door grudgingly to guests who have outworn their welcome, kept them waiting for his coming. A new place of refuge had to be devised. The scythes of conscience were cutting very close. The flowers of the first steps of the journey were over; somewhere ahead, how near they could not tell, hung the precipice. It was he who suggested her house, and she who unwillingly consented.

They met in her room at the back—hers entirely, from which everything not hers was excluded. It was arranged as a studio, with low lounges and little tables, absurdly short in the legs, and a piano which took up more floor than was its share. It was there that she played to him and at him.

It was a white evening in April. Day, like a truant child, refused to go to bed. A pot of hyacinths stood in the open window, his latest gift to her. The room was haunted by their fragrance. She was at the piano, dreaming over a listless minor tune. He crept softly behind her and slipped his arms about her neck. Instead of resisting, she leant her golden head against his shoulder, still playing, smiling up at him.

"Sweetheart," he whispered.

She bent and kissed his hand. It was as though it were a confession for which she had long waited.

"Sweetheart," he repeated. "I've got to go away to-morrow."

Her hands crashed discordantly. He seized them in his own, pressing them against her breast. He could feel, rather than see, that she was sobbing. "I didn't dare to tell you. It's to America—a business trip I've postponed and postponed."

He dipped his lips into her hair; his voice became scarcely audible. "But I'm not obliged to go alone— Am I?"

She stiffened. She was both afraid and glad. To him her fear was ridiculous. He had come to it at last—the precipice. He looked down, hung far over it and laughed that it should ever have scared him. But she—she was all for evasion now, all for persuading herself that it was not there.

"Alone!" She attempted to make her tones uninterested. "I don't know. I suppose Aline——"

He pressed his face against hers. "Foolish child! Why suppose?"

She lay back against him, her eyes closed.

"I don't know. You think I'm pretending."

"You are," he insisted. "No one need know. We can sail together."

She tried to clutch herself from him, her eyes wide and fearful. He held her fast; again she sank against him, shocked and yet eager. He was explaining to her.

"The boat leaves the dock at midnight. I was so sure you'd come that I've booked a cabin for you. I can get through my business in New York in a week, and then——"

"Would you take me to Amboise?" she whispered.

He winced. There was a halt before he answered. With her woman's tenacity, she was adding one last laurel to her triumph. He hurried over his assent.

"To Amboise! If you like. Now will you go?"

Silence. The breeze, blowing in at the window, brought to them the perfume of hyacinths.

"Yes," she hesitated.

Not until he had reached home that evening did he realise the decision he had arrived at. During the months of procrastination, while his purpose had remained unformed and nebulous, he had lost sight of the worth of the goal to which he had drifted in the excitement of the challenge.

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Aline . . . went quietly about, packing his things for him, inquiring whether he wouldn't require this and whether that wasn't unnecessary.

Now that he had accomplished the intention of his adventure, he was staggered. He watched Aline closely. Let her give one sign to recall him, and— But Aline, that night and next morning, went quietly about, packing his things for him, inquiring whether he wouldn't require this and whether that wasn't unnecessary.

About eight on the evening of his departure he rose suddenly. She eyed him nervously.

"What is it?"

"I'm going."

"But you needn't go for three hours yet."

"I know. But I'm going."

His voice was obstinate. She stared at him apprehensively. "But, Dan, I was coming to see you off and——"

He interrupted.

"You needn't. You'd be late getting back. There'd be nobody to look after you."

He was already at the telephone, calling for a taxi.

Her back was to the wall. She had gone too far with her desperate strategy. She had held him too long at arm's length. She had wanted him to learn about women—other women. She guessed with whom he was going.

"But Dan——"

He kissed her—kissed her like a starved man stealing shamefully under the eyes of the owner. The boxes were carried out. She must tell him—she followed him to do so. The boy was slamming the door of the lift. Her husband scarcely looked at her, but the furtive longing in his eyes spoke loudly.

All the way as he drove he was haunted; tormented by the sense of irretrievable loss, appalled by his heartsick madness, aghast that it should have endured so long. And yet—When a straight man plays cards for money, he pays when settlement becomes due. The auburn-haired girl was waiting for him.

She was sitting in the back room where their affair had grown to its climax. It was in darkness; he could only just make out her shadow.

"Birrel!"

No answer.

"Birrel!"

He went over to her. Pity was in his heart for what this thing must mean to her. He put his arms about her very gently.

"Birrell! My poor darling!"

She turned her face away from him when he attempted to kiss her.

"You're frightened. Don't be frightened. I'll always be good to you. I'll spend my life in——"

Her voice came to him low and steady.

"I'm not frightened. I'm cold. I always have been cold. I'm sorry. It's the way God made me."

His arms dropped from her.

"Cold! Good Heavens! Isn't it rather late in the day to discover——? You don't mean——?"

She slipped from him in the darkness and hurried over to the door. For a moment, as it opened, she halted, looking back.

"I do. I mean that I'm not coming."

She had never meant to come with him. She had flattered him up to the danger-mark for her own amusement and profit. And the humiliation of it all was that he knew he deserved it.

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And so he learnt the last law of the game of philandering—that each player out-dares the other in tiptoeing nearer to the trap of penalty, and that when one is caught the other scampers off. A heartless game, built up on burlesqued sincerities and violated sanctities!

He let himself out of the house. It was all silent. In the street the taxi, piled with luggage, was waiting. He stepped in. The driver leant back for orders. To the man's repeated question, he replied angrily, "Drive anywhere. Don't you hear me? Anywhere away from here, and do it quickly."

Thinking his fare was ill, the man drove him back to the flats from which he had brought him. When his passenger did not alight, he went into the building and consulted with the porter. The porter rang up his flat, and, having been answered, came out into the street to render assistance.

Dan stumbled out in a dazed condition; he had allowed himself to be led as far as the lift before he recognised his surroundings. He hesitated, seemed on the point of escaping, then gave orders for the taxi to wait for him, shrugged his shoulders and smiled grimly. He would make a clean breast of it before everything was ended; he owed Aline that.

As he entered the hall of his flat, he was surprised by the sound of music. The piano was being played weakly, by a very poor amateur. He listened. It was the tune of a little French nursery rhyme that Aline used to whistle when she was happy—*Sur le Pont D'Avignon*.

As his hand touched the door of the room, the piano stopped abruptly. He peered in. He felt like an intruder who had omitted the courtesy of knocking.

Aline had risen from the keyboard and stood beneath the lamp, her hands spread out as if she had been crucified—her back to the wall.

They gazed at one another.

At last he broke the silence. "I've come back."

She said nothing.

"Before I go away, I've come back to tell you."

And she only stared at him, making no sign.

"I've come back to you," he whispered hoarsely. "I've been a fool; I'm sorry." When she still kept silence, he added, "I can go, if you don't want me. I shouldn't know where to go. I——"

She sank forward, her face in her hands, sobbing.

He stole timidly over and touched her. Her arms went about him.

"You were—you were playing?"

She lifted her face from his shoulder, smiling in that quaint way women have when they are proud of their tears.

"Oh, Dan, it was my doing. I had to push you from me before we could ever come nearer."

In that moment he understood, and yet not everything. "But—but you were playing?" he repeated.

She lowered her eyes. "Not playing—only trying. I wanted to learn for you. That was where I went," her voice sank to a murmur, "all the long time that we weren't together."

A lump grew up in his throat. He could scarcely see her, though his lips were touching hers almost. He spoke with difficulty.

"At last I begin to know you—the real you, little Aline."

She laughed softly in her crying.

"You think; but I wonder if you do? You—you never knew anything about women. Wasn't that why I loved you? But you had to learn in order to——"

He kissed her, finishing her sentence, "In order to know your worth. Now play something."

But in the middle of her playing he seized her hands.

"I've got an idea. How soon can you pack?"

She eyed him whimsically.

"Some women would take six months to think about it, and then wouldn't do it. They'd have to be clever women. But I—oh, I think I could pack in an hour if I loved anybody."

He lifted her off her feet.

"Do it."

She smoothed out her dress demurely, running her little "white mice hands" over the places where he had ruffled it. Then:

"Where are we going?"

"To Amboise," he whispered. "We always meant to go back, didn't we?"

She ran from the room lest he should again kiss her, returned, and hovered on the threshold, mist and dusk with the eyes of reality—a dream woman come true.

"D'you want me to help you?" he asked eagerly.

She twisted her mouth at the masculine absurdity of such a question. "Not to help me pack. But to watch me; to have you always near me."

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Mother Says "No!"

By Rosemary North.

Even in this age of domineering daughters there are still some mothers who hedge their girls round with restrictions that allow them no chance to develop their individuality or broaden their horizon. The maternal "No" has much to answer for, and the following article shows how it often deprives a girl of much of the innocent enjoyment which is her natural birthright.

This is a progressive age, but there are still some mothers who insist upon treating their grown-up daughters merely as children of a larger growth, and who think it their duty to regulate every detail of their lives, from the number of blankets they shall have on the bed to the size of the V they shall not have in their Sunday blouse.

It is usually the stay-at-home girls who are the victims, though occasionally the bread-winner finds her liberty curtailed and the disposal of her salary questioned. A girl may live at home, but as often as not she has no voice in the household arrangements, her likes and dislikes are never consulted, and she is expected to fit herself into her surroundings without a murmur. Even her pleasures are often minimised by the restrictions which dog her footsteps.

Unless she has a brother or some trustworthy older friend to guard her, dances and other late festivities are almost out of the question, for she is not allowed out alone after ten o'clock. Needless to say, the cloistered girl is not acquainted with a latch-key, so that even if the time is extended there is the discomfiting knowledge that someone is sitting up for her.

So all through the waltz that might have been so delightful she is haunted by the fear of being late, and has either to slip off like Cinderella at the height of the fun or face an outraged parent drowsing resentfully over the fire.

Miss Nineteen-Year-Old has to wait at home until mother can take her shopping; as she is not allowed to go alone.

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Tea was a dream of fairy-like surroundings and alluring music.

The cloistered girl has no impromptu frivols. Not for her the joys of a sudden bout of shopping or an unpremeditated *matinée.* The summer sunshine may whisper enchantingly of the delights of being wafted westward on the wings of a motor-'bus, a lingering stroll round the shops, perhaps the acquisition of a new blouse or a long-coveted parasol.

But it whispers in vain, for mother's thoughts are with the raspberries she is about to preserve, and she is too busy to go gallivanting, and since her nineteen-year-old daughter has never bought even a pair of stockings without supervision, all her entreaties are in vain. Mother says "No!" and forges another link in the chain that keeps her young daughter a prisoner on the doorstep of life, when she would be wandering joyously unafraid along the smiling paths she longs to explore.

There may be danger in allowing complete independence, but there is also danger in too much restraint, for to the cloistered girl even a taste of freedom is unbalancing; small attentions assume undue importance, and the unaccustomed wine of liberty mounts to the head.

This was the case with Phyllis, a pretty, carefully chaperoned damsel of twenty summers, whose *tête-à-tête* acquaintance with the male sex was limited to a brief and guileless half-hour with the curate when she arranged the flowers at the church. Her first burst of freedom came through a friend of her mother's, who, having a nephew from India to entertain, planned a day in town with Phyllis to complete the trio. At the last moment she was prevented from going, and Phyllis, her timid hesitation overridden, found herself consigned to the care of Robin, a brown-faced young man, with merry blue eyes and a blithely intimate manner.

They lunched gaily at an opulent restaurant. The young man from India had a kind heart and he was touched by the artless enjoyment of this wide-eyed young girl with the pink cheeks and naively appealing manner. The theatre was punctuated by her ripples of delight, and she almost wept with joy when he presented her with a sumptuous box of chocolates. Tea was a dream of fairy-like surroundings and alluring music, amid which she poured out the tea for a lordly young man who handed crumpets with the courtly air of one who proffers a kingdom.

It was summer time and the Park was a bower of green as a taxi bore them swiftly homewards, and Phyllis, her lap full of the pink roses heaped upon her by her companion, was bewildered, tremulous, but riotously happy. She tried to thank him, and her voice faltered; to him it seemed the most natural thing in the world to take her hand—he had a caressing voice, and Phyllis in her embroidered muslin and rose-trimmed hat was really irresistible. She went home to ply her father with questions about India, and borrow her mother's wedding

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ring that she might view the effect of it on her own slim finger.

She never saw Robin again. But she still fills a drawer with dainty needlework, and lives for his next leave. And it has not chanced to come to her ears that when the time comes, Robin will be accompanied by his very charming wife.

There are many mothers—devoted and loving—who fail to recognise that their daughters have a right to self-expression, that they need an ever-widening horizon if they are to obtain a sane, healthy outlook on life. Many girls repress their individuality in consequence, and forgo their natural inclinations because they are not in accordance with the code of household ways. Perhaps a girl may hanker to spend a quiet hour in her room rather than join the family circle, but there are few families where the need for occasional solitude is recognised, and such conduct would be dubbed an act of rank unsociability or a sign that she was sickening for some fell disease.

Or it may be that when holidays are discussed, Beryl, on whom the joys of Sandbourne have palled, demurs at joining the family circle, and suggests seeking pastures new with a bosom friend. The project is nipped in the bud by an emphatic "No!" from mamma, who resents any attempt to split up the annual party, and appears to think the heavens would fall did she go to Sandbourne minus one of her flock.

So they go to Sandbourne, stay in the same house, are "done" by the same landlady, and are treated to the same greasy eggs and bacon and the same tired salads as in former years. And Beryl, who has other aspirations, and longs for the unknown joys of Holland, where her friend is even now storing up glorious memories, waxes irritable, slaps her young brothers, and is put down as sulky and ungrateful when she yawns at the pierrots, and refuses to be impressed by the beauty of the Fairy Glen, which she has already visited religiously every year for the last thirteen years.

It may be that occasionally the cloistered girl is suffered to pay a visit alone, but even this snatch of freedom is not unalloyed bliss. Her boxes are packed to the tune of her mother's comprehensive instructions as to correct behaviour, until the girl's brain reels and she wonders dimly if her hostess really would be scandalised if she forgot to strip her bed, and why it should be an unpardonable offence for girls to bathe in the same bit of ocean as men.

All through her holiday she is haunted by the fear of committing a *faux pas*; she is self-conscious and ill at ease, and is consequently quite unable to do herself justice. With her mother's stringent warnings against "mixed bathing" in her ears, she sits disconsolately on the beach while the others make merry in the water, and loses half the joy of a *tête-à-tête* on the river, by her dismal wondering as to whether a young man with whom one has walked, eaten, and tennissed for three days, would come under the heading of what her mother called "safe acquaintances."

Her hostess probably puts her down as

While the others are making merry in the water, she sits disconsolately on the beach and wonders why her mother should consider it an unpardonable offence for girls to bathe in the same bit of ocean as men.

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"a nice little thing, but dull," for the cloistered girl has little initiative or enterprise. Accustomed all her life to be guided by mother, she is utterly at sea when called upon to decide things for herself, and endures agonies lest the frock she has selected for the garden party should not be suitable, or her choice of songs prove an unhappy one. And when her visit is over she departs homewards vaguely troubled lest she shall fail to answer satisfactorily the searching catechism which she knows will be levelled at her by her mother.

The fact that such a girl is usually a "stay-at-home" only increases the tragedy, for she is expected to marry, while at the same time her opportunities of mixing with eligible men are absurdly restricted. Her circle is so small and her little world so narrow that she is often forced to jump at any chance that presents itself of fulfilling her mission in life by taking unto herself a husband.

Moreover, there is always the danger that eligible youths may be frightened off by the dragon-like attitude of mamma. If her "No" is forcible over trivialities, it is doubly so where matrimonial prospects are concerned, and if she sets herself against a suitor he will be bold indeed should he succeed in breaking down the barrier of her defence. She considers it her right to choose her daughter's husband just as she has always chosen her frocks and hats, and she confidently expects the same humble acquiescence in her choice.

And if there are no suitors for the cloistered girl's hand her prospect is indeed dreary, for she will be condemned to live out her little days for ever under the dominance of her mother, who will relax her guardianship but very slightly even when the pretty young daughter has become the disappointed spinster.

The remedy for the maternal "No!" is a little hard to find, more especially as it is generally the outcome of a genuine desire for a daughter's welfare, and mothers are sensitive souls. No girl likes to defy her parents, but a great deal may be done by tact. Perhaps you have set your heart on a blue bedroom and your mother advocates pink. It is open to you to declare that you loathe pink and to make yourself thoroughly unpleasant about it; it is also open to you to point out that your room is sunny, and blue is a nice cool colour; that you already have a blue cushion, and blue ribbons in your nighties, and it would be so jolly if the whole thing could be in keeping.

It is the same with the latch-key; don't demand it at the point of the bayonet, as it were; think of all the good reasons why you should be intrusted with it, and advance them tactfully and in your most charming manner. Be content to win your freedom gradually; the barrier of the maternal "No!" can be broken down more surely by unobtrusive and repeated attacks than by an impetuous onslaught.

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A NEW AND THRILLING SERIES.

Miss Meg Gehrts.

HANDSHAKES *With* DEATH

THE WHITE GODDESS OF THE WANGORA: MOVING-PICTURE WORK IN THE AFRICAN WILDS.

Written by C. L. McCluer Stevens, from the narrative of Miss Meg Gehrts.

ACTRESSES who, like myself, specialise in picture-play productions, frequently find themselves tackling all sorts of queer undertakings, and we are not, therefore, easily surprised out of that orthodox professional calm which we all try, more or less successfully, to cultivate.

When, however, it was suggested to me, early last summer, that I should take a trip into the far interior of Africa, in a district where no white woman had ever been before, in order to play "leading lady" in a series of dramas of native life, I confess to having been for once completely taken aback.

Nor did even the fact that the proposed expedition was being financed and personally conducted by Major Hans Schomburgk, F.R.G.S., the well-known African explorer and hunter, reassure me completely. I hesitated long. But eventually the prospect of shaking the dust of cities from my feet for awhile, and living the extremely simple life amongst unspoilt children of nature in altogether novel surroundings, tempted me into acquiescence, and—greatly against the advice of my relatives and friends—I consented.

Accordingly, after the necessary preliminary preparations in London, we sailed from Dover on August 20th in the good ship—I believe that is the accepted nautical term—*Henny Woermann*, bound for Lome, which is the capital and port of Togo, a tiny German protectorate wedged in between the Gold Coast Colony, on the west, and Dahomey, on the east.

The coast-line is only thirty-two miles long, but inland the country widens out a lot, and it was for this hinterland—largely unknown and uncharted—that we were bound.

Our arrival at Lome was inopportune. On the day before a member of the tiny European colony there had died of yellow fever, and all the flags were at half-mast. However, we only stayed at the port long enough to disembark our baggage, and then journeyed up country to a place called Atakpame, distant about 110 miles. A railway runs so far, and at the railhead civilisation may be said to come to an end abruptly.

Arrived at Atakpame, we were given a right royal welcome by Baron Codelli von Fahnenfeld, who is building for the German Government, at Kamina, near by, an immense wireless station, intended to communicate direct with the wireless station at Nauen, just outside Berlin.

The Baron first introduced me to my "house"—a straw hut, like all the dwellings thereabouts, but, as he proudly pointed out,

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it was, unlike them, possessed of a cement floor.

To begin with, it most certainly was not weatherproof, for I could see, through the interstices of the loosely-thatched roof, the stars twinkling far above. The wind blew in at the front and out at the back, and I was conscious, all the time I was dressing for dinner, that I was the cynosure of several hundred pairs of eyes, belonging to as many natives, men and women, who, clad in the climate, as the saying is out there, crowded in serried ranks all round the wattle walls, anxious for a glimpse, through the all too numerous chinks, of the wonderful white woman timidly robing and disrobing within.

But dinner made amends for everything. We were the Baron's guests for that evening. It was a glorious, gorgeous meal, beautifully prepared and perfectly served under conditions which seemed ideal to me, partly, no doubt, because they were altogether so novel.

Oh, how I enjoyed this my first real meal in the heart of Africa! The memory of the taste of it lingers on my palate yet, even as I write. Nothing was lacking, nothing was *de trop*. The caviare was as good as the *consommé*, and both were perfect. The partridge *en casserole* was hot, juicy, and tender. The spring lamb with asparagus shoots was a dream. The peach Melba melted in one's mouth. The coffee was as good as any I have tasted in Vienna, which is only another way of saying that it was the very best possible. The wines, like the liqueurs, were just "it."

When my host informed me, over our cigarettes, that all the comestibles came out of cans, I simply could not believe it. But it was the truth, of course, nevertheless. Only canned provisions are available in the Togo hinterland, if one excepts chickens and eggs, and an occasional joint of very tough and very insipid beef.

After dinner, however, came my first real African ordeal. Wishing to do honour to our genial host, I had donned one of my prettiest low-necked frocks, and the mosquitoes took a mean and dastardly advantage of my innocent experience. The Baron and Major Schomburgk swathed me from head to foot in blankets and tablecloths, so that I looked like an Egyptian mummy. Nevertheless, ere bed-time, I grew unbeautifully speckled and very, very lumpy.

On rising at sunrise, I asked quite innocently for my bath. My native boy grinned, and pointed to a bucket hanging from the top of a tall pole in the open compound fronting my hut. At the same time he explained by gestures that by pulling out, by means of a cord that was attached to it, the bung in the bottom, I could manage to obtain a very good imitation of a genuine shower-bath.

Nobody seemed to think that there was anything amiss in the publicity that must of necessity have attached to the proposed performance, but I was of a different opinion. I shirked my bath for that one morning, and during the afternoon my boy, acting on my instructions, built a wattle screen round the compound.

I was looking forward to starting rehearsing that day on the first of our native plays, which we had entitled "The White Goddess of the Wangora," but then I knew nothing at that time of the delays incidental to any kind of work in which natives play a part.

Time is of no value whatever to these wild and woolly savages, and as we had of necessity to get together a small army of several hundred "supers," literally weeks elapsed before we were ready.

I chafed dreadfully at the delay, but there was no help for it. The requisite number of natives had to be collected laboriously from a score or more of villages scattered over a wide area of country; when we had got them together, everything had to be explained to them over and over again through the medium of three or four different interpreters. In fact, it was nothing but talk, talk, talk, palaver, palaver, palaver, from morning till night.

There was considerable difficulty, too, in getting them to face the camera. Like most savages, these Togo natives have an inherent rooted aversion to being photographed. Luckily, however, Major Schomburgk had taken moving pictures of some of their villages during a previous expedition he had led into these parts, and some of the very natives we had engaged had figured in them.

So, as we had brought a projecting machine with us, we made shift to rig up a screen, and showed them themselves, their wives, and their little ones, going about their ordinary avocations in their own homes. The effect was instantaneous. They had, of course, seen ordinary photographs before, but none of them had ever beheld any moving pictures. Now they all wanted to come into one, and whereas before most of them hung back, they were now only too anxious to push themselves in the forefront of every scene.

Only one act they shirked. This was a battle scene, in which several of the warriors

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I had to . . . guide him in a wild flight for freedom over rocks and bushes, through foaming streams, and up hill and down dale. *(P. 338, col. 2.)*

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were supposed to be slain. We had the greatest difficulty in persuading even one native to act dead. Their objection, they explained, was due to the fact that they believed that if they played at being dead before the white man's mysterious machine, they would most likely be dead in reality before morning.

At length, by the promise of a liberal bonus, one warrior, greatly daring, consented to play the part. The next morning, the head interpreter knocked at the door of my hut to inform me that there were "eight dead natives lying in the compound outside."

"What!" I screamed, in great alarm. And, hastily donning my dressing-gown, I ran out.

But I need not have got scared. The eight were not really defunct. They were merely shamming death, and wanted me to see how well they could do it, with a view to being taken on for the part in the forthcoming day's rehearsal.

The one who had played dead the day before had not, of course, died during the night, as they more than half expected he would do, and consequently they were now only too willing and anxious to follow the lead he had set them.

At length the long, wearisome series of preliminary rehearsals came to an end. Everybody was supposed to be perfect, and we made ready to film the play.

Up to this I had rehearsed in ordinary attire. Now I had to don native dress, and, as I am a stickler for realism, I insisted—against Major Schomburgk's advice—in playing with bare feet and legs, bare shoulders and arms, and with no head covering.

As the principal scenes were laid out of doors in the middle of the bush, and under a blazing tropical sun, this, as was pointed out to me, would be not a little trying. Nevertheless, I thought I could put up with it, and, as a matter of fact, I did, though I suffered afterwards.

My part was that of the "White Goddess." I was supposed to have been cast ashore as a babe on the coast of Togo, and taken up country by the savages who found me, and who afterwards placed me in charge of their principal ju-ju shrine, paying me, in the course of time, almost divine honours.

I had grown to womanhood without ever having seen one of my own colour and race, and when a white hunter (Major Schomburgk) was taken prisoner by the tribe whose high priestess I was, I became naturally attracted to him. Bound hand and foot, he was cast into a hut, preparatory to being put to death. I had to free him from his bonds, and guide him in a wild flight for freedom over rocks and bushes, through foaming streams, and up hill and down dale.

All this I did. It is the great scene of the play, and to film it took one whole day. Major Schomburgk had given strict orders for all our eight hundred or so of supers to muster at six a.m. sharp, but with the irritating perverseness of natives they did not put in an appearance until ten a.m., when, of course, the sun was already high in the heavens.

This added tremendously to my trials and tribulations, and was, in fact, to a great extent the cause of my subsequent breakdown. By noon, when the sun was directly overhead, it was so hot that the operator was unable to bear to touch the brass-work of his machine with his ungloved hand.

How I got through the afternoon's work I don't know to this day. I managed it somehow. There is a marvellous sustaining power in the mere nervous tension of acting, and the click, click, click of the camera helps to keep one tuned up, as it were. But directly it was all over I fell fainting on my camp bed in my hut, and the doctor had to be called in. My feet were cut and scarred, and full of thorns. My legs, too, were badly scratched and torn. And, to crown all, I had a slight sunstroke.

The next day I was in a high fever, and the day after that in a higher one. Malaria gripped me, and I really thought at one time that my first African photo-play rehearsal was going to be my last one. Even the doctor looked grave after the first week or so.

"You have malarial fever," he explained, "and you have it pretty badly. Your spleen is about four times larger than it ought to be, and if you cough it will probably burst."

As at that time I was troubled with an almost incessant cough, this was not consoling. However, liberal doses of quinine, repeated at frequent intervals, cured me at last.

(Another "Handshake with Death" next month.)

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CAP and BELLS

PITY THE POOR MOTORIST.

"Doesn't it give you a terrible feeling when you run over a man?" they asked him.

"Well, if he's a large man," replied the owner of the motor, "it does give one a pretty rough jolt."

* * * * *

EVIDENCE WANTED.

"Mother," said Bobby, after a full week of obedience, "have I been a good boy lately?"

"Yes, dear," replied his mother, "a very, very good boy."

"And do you trust me?" he continued.

"Why, of course, mother trusts her little boy!" she answered.

But the chastened child was not pacified. "I mean really, really trust me, you know," he explained.

"Yes, I really, really trust you," nodded his mother. "Why do you ask?"

"Just because," said Bobby, diving his hands into his pockets and looking her in the face, "if you trust me like you say you do, why do you go on hiding the jam?"

* * * *

RIGHT FOR ONCE.

"I had my fortune told to-day."

"Well?"

"The medium said I was about to lose some money, and then asked me for half-a-crown."

* * * *

ONCE WAS ENOUGH.

BAND LEADER: "Don't you ever play anything in A flat?"

NEW TROMBONIST: "No, the other tenants in the block won't allow it."

SEEING IS BELIEVING.

"My son, this whipping hurts me more than it does you."

"I'll believe it if you'll show me where you're black and blue."

* * * * *

AN IDYLL.

A maiden sat and knitted with her lover by her side,
And she murmured her directions as the pattern-book she eyed.
"My dearest, may I kiss you? One little kiss," said he;
But she bent above her knitting, counting slowly: "One, two, three."

"I'd like to take you out, dear, to a concert or a play,
But I'm so very busy that I cannot find the way;
Opportunities are lacking." Then she puckered up her brow
As, with finger on the wording, she read softly: "Make one now."

"I'm working hard at business that the day may quickly come
When I at last can offer you a comfortable home.
If we were married I should be the happiest of men."
But she murmured, all oblivious: "Knit two together then."

Judith Carrington.

The Downfall of the XI.

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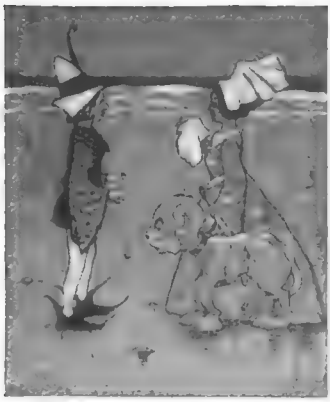
A HAPPIE TAYLE OF——



1. Ye faire damsel did tearfully seek the aide of Sir Algernon to remove ye spelle of one whom ye wicked witch had changed to a monster. Righte cheerfully did he consent, for he loved ye faire damsel.

MONEY WELL SPENT.

PROUD FATHER: "Welcome back to the old farm, my boy! So ye got through college all right?"

FARMER'S SON: "Yes, father."

PROUD FATHER: "Ye know I told ye to study up on chemistry and things so you'd know best what to do with different kinds of land. What do ye think of that meadow there, for instance?"

FARMER'S SON (joyfully): "Great Scott! What a place for cricket!"

* * * *

POOR BOBBY.

"I say, ma," stammered Bobby, through the suds, as his mother scrubbed and scrubbed him, "I guess you want to get rid o' me, don't you?"

"Why, no, Bobby, dear," replied his mother. "Whatever put such an idea into your mind?"

"Oh, nuthin'," said Bobby, "only it seems to me you're tryin' to rub me out."

* * * * *

USEFUL ON A HOT DAY.

"My dining-room is the hottest place on earth. I wish I knew what to do to cool it."

"Did you ever take a friend home to dinner when your wife didn't expect it?"

* * * * *

A MILD HINT.

JONES: "Hullo, Smith, where are you off to?"

SMITH: "Oh, just to the post office to complain of the rotten delivery service."

JONES: "Why, what's the matter?"

SMITH: "That cheque you promised to send me ten days ago has not reached me yet, so I'm afraid it's gone astray."

QUITE A CHANGE.

"Why do you feed every tramp who comes along? They never do any work for you."

"No," said his wife, "but it is a great satisfaction to me to see a man eat a meal without finding fault with the cooking."

2. But first did he go to a learned gent, who (for much goode cashe) did tell hym what to do to take ye cruelle spelle off ye monster—which was as follows:

AN EXCELLENT REASON.

"How does it happen," said the teacher to the new pupil, "that your name is Allen and your mother's name is Brown?"

"Well," explained the small boy after a moment's thought, "you see, she married again and I didn't."

AND DID THEY UNDERSTAND?

FRIEND (at a French play): "Why did you applaud so vigorously when that comedian made his speech before the curtain?"

SPRIGGINS (confidentially): "So that folks would think I understood French. What did he say?"

FRIEND: "He said the remainder of his part must be taken by an understudy, as his mother was dying."

* * * * *

RATHER UNKIND.

CHOLLY: "When I was a boy, you know, the doctor said if I didn't stop smoking cigarettes I would become feeble-minded."

MISS KEEN: "Well, why didn't you stop?"

* * * * *

NOT QUITE WHAT HE MEANT.

"Father," said John on going into the house, "I think Mr. Tatt must be going mad."

"What makes you think so?" asked his father.

"Because," said John, "when I entered his house this morning he said: 'Boy, where's yer 'at?' and it were on my head all the time."

* * * *

ONE POINT OF VIEW.

TEACHER: "Willie, in your essay on the giraffe you call it a haughty animal. Why did you write that?"

WILLIE: "'Cause it looks down on the other animals."

* * * *

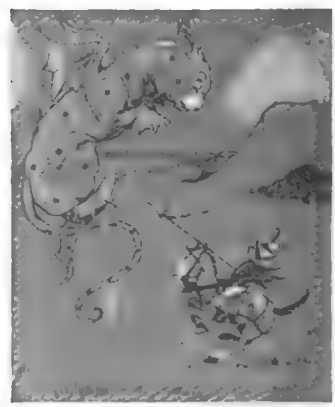
TIME FLIES.

"Why, look here," said the merchant who was in need of a boy, "aren't you the same boy who was in here a week ago?"

"Yes, sir," said the applicant.

"I thought so. And didn't I tell you then that I wanted an older boy?"

"Yes, sir. That's why I'm back. I'm older now."



3. First did Sir Algernon fighte with ye Spotted Dragon, and, after a fierce battle and many grievous wounds, did slay hym and did take one hayre from hys eare.

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ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

"Is it necessary to inclose stamps?" asked the poet.

"More necessary, even, than to inclose poetry," responded the editor.

* * * * *

SIMPLE.

"Well, then, it is arranged. Come round to-morrow morning and I will start you in your new duties."

"To-morrow? Impossible."

"Why so?"

"Because I am going to take part in a great parade of the unemployed."

* * * * *

DIFFICULT TO DRESS AGAIN.

A little slum child was enjoying his first glimpse of pastoral life. The setting sun was gilding the old-fashioned garden, and he sat on a little stool beside the farmer's wife, who was plucking a chicken. He watched the operation gravely for some time; then he asked: "Do yer take off their clothes every night?"

* * * *

COSTLY APPETITES.

DR. PILLS: "Why are you always so careful to inquire what your patients eat? Does it assist you in diagnosis?"

DR. SQUILLS: "Yes. I can form some idea from their dinners what to charge 'em."

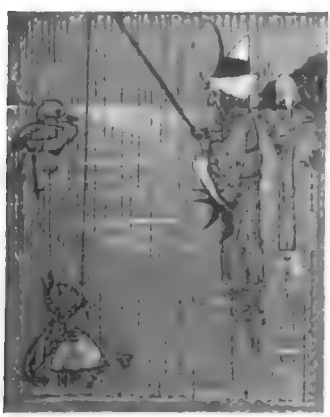
* * * *

HE HAD LEARNT A LESSON.

"I want a pair of button shoes for my wife."

"This way, sir. What kind do you wish, sir?"

"Doesn't matter, so long as they don't button down the back."



4. Then did he fishe for many weary days in ye Drearie Swamp (and he did hate ye fishing) until he did catche ye Tail-less Fishe—and a very bad colde.

OF SOME USE AFTER ALL.

"You don't make very good music with that instrument," said a by-stander to the man with the bass drum as the band ceased to play.

"No," admitted the pounder of the drum, "I know I don't, but I drown a heap of bad music."

A NEW SOUP.

A man dining at a West-end hotel had been asked in quick succession by three different waiters if he would have soup. A little annoyed, he said to the last one: "Is it compulsory?"

"No, sir," answered the waiter. "Mock turtle."

5. For many months did he toile for ye Goblin Snaggles until they did give him some Ho-ha. All these things did Algie make into a spelle, which did take ye enchantment off ye monster.

——A LYTTLE MISTAKE.

6. Then did he ask ye faire damsel to meet hym (that he might propose to her). But there came a burly ruffian instead, who did quoth this way: "I'm ye chappe off whom you tooke ye spell, and ye fayre damsel thanks you—for I am her husband!"

A NEW USE FOR IT.

HE: "How, aw, did you enjoy your tour in France?"

SHE: "Oh, immensely; it was delightful to hear the French peasants singing the Mayonnaise?"

* * * *

LUCKY TEACHERS.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR: "Who is it that sits idly by doing nothing while everybody else is working?"

BOBBY: "The teacher."

* * * *

GIVING HERSELF AWAY.

MRS. POTTS: "How do you know I was spying in your house through my opera glasses?"

MRS. KETTLES: "I saw you through my own opera glasses."

* * * * *

A CONTRAST.

When Tom wrote to his Nancy,
To say he loved her so,
He put beneath of crosses
A row.

But Tom has married Nancy;
And there is often now,
When Tom or Nancy cross is,
A row!
Elsie Skeet.

* * * * *

WHAT DID THE BRIDE SAY?

GROOM: "Here's a little present, Jack. I was certainly lucky to have you for my best man."

JACK: "Don't mention it. I hope I do the same for you many times."

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NO IDLE BOAST.

A pompous manufacturer of machinery was showing a stranger over his factory.

"Fine piece of work, isn't it?" he said, when they were looking at a very ingenious machine.

"Yes," said the visitor, "but you cannot hold a candle to the goods we are turning out."

"Indeed!" said the chagrined manufacter, "and what is your line?"

"Gunpowder," was the reply.

* * * *

IN ADVANCE.

A lady entertaining an important guest was giving final instructions to her new maid just arrived from the country.

"Now, Polly," she said, "in the morning take a jug of hot water up to Mr. Chumleigh's room. Be sure not to forget it."

The lady thought no more of the matter until the next day, when at noon she remarked casually:

"You took that hot water up to Mr. Chumleigh's room this morning, I suppose?"

Polly beamed.

"Why, yes, mum. I was so frightened I'd forget it I took it up overnight."

* * * * *

KNEW HIM TOO WELL.

SMITH: "This bill of mine wants backing. Think Brown would do it?"

HARRIS: "How long has he known you?"

SMITH: "A couple of months."

HARRIS: "I'm afraid that's too long."

* * * * *

EASILY REMEDIED.

BASHFUL SUITOR: "Margaret, for weeks past there's been something trembling on my lips, and——"

PERT MAIDEN: "Yes, I've noticed it. Why don't you shave it off?"

"Phew! it's hot. Let me have a cooling draught at once, waiter."

THAT EXPLAINED IT.

"How on earth has Maulstick managed to get his rot hung on the line?"

"Why, look at the title of the picture, old man—'Washing Day!'"

* * * * *

THE *UN*PLEASANT TRUTH.

For telling the truth
There's none like Bill Trevor.
He once lost a tooth
For telling the truth
To a much stronger youth!
Take care, if you're clever;
For, telling the truth,
There's none *like* Bill Trevor.

K. E. W.

* * * * *

CARELESS.

GUIDE (at museum): "Here you see the waist coat worn by Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. The bullet that ended his life went through this hole here."

NURSE (to her charges): "Do you remember, children, how I have warned you against carelessness? If the hole had been mended at the proper time the bullet could not have gone through it, and he would still be alive."

* * * *

NATURE'S AID.

The other day a countryman called at the offices of a fire insurance company, and intimated that he desired to insure his shop and household effects.

"What facilities for extinguishing a fire have you in your village?" inquired the official.

The man scratched his head, pondered for a moment or two, then answered:

"Well, only the rain!"

"Yessir certainly, sir."

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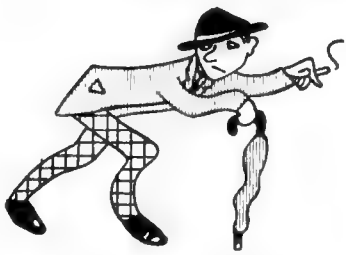
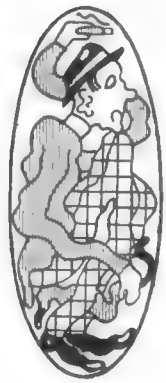
A·CUBIST·DRAMA

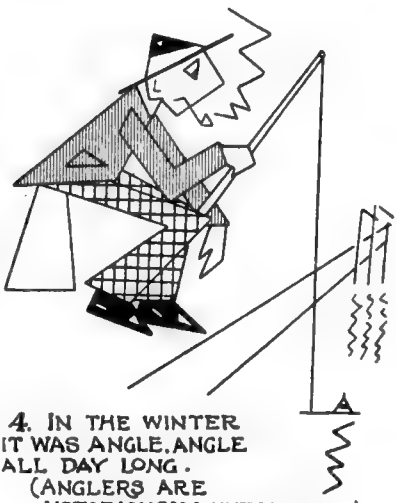


1. HE WAS A LOW PERSON, RATHER CROOKED IN FACT—

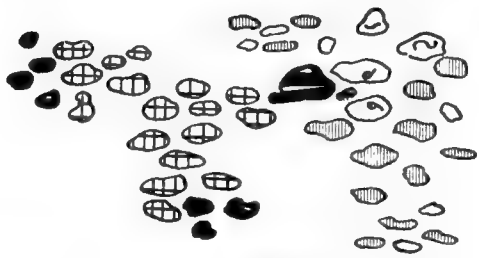
2. AND HE GREW MORE AND MORE CROOKED EVERY DAY.



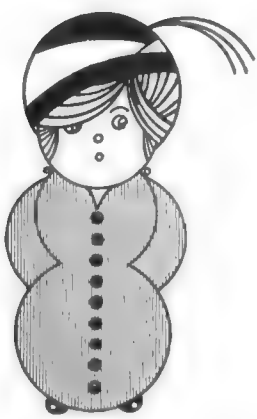
3. HE WOULD DO NO WORK, AND IN SUMMER SPENT ALL HIS TIME IN THE OVAL.



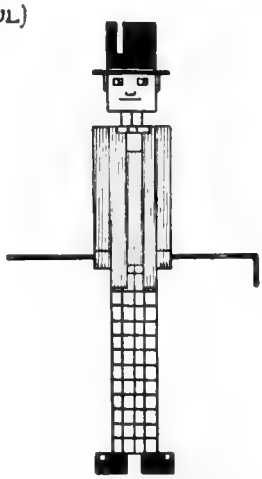
4. IN THE WINTER IT WAS ANGLE, ANGLE ALL DAY LONG. (ANGLERS ARE NOTORIOUSLY UNTRUTHFUL)



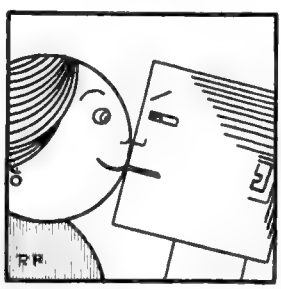
5. BEFORE LONG HE WAS STONEY — ABSOLUTELY BROKE;



6. BUT ONE-DAY HE FELL IN LOVE WITH AN ALL ROUND GOOD GIRL.



7. HE IS NOW QUITE STRAIGHT AND UPRIGHT,



8. AND LIVES HAPPILY WITH HIS WIFE IN A NICE LITTLE SQUARE.

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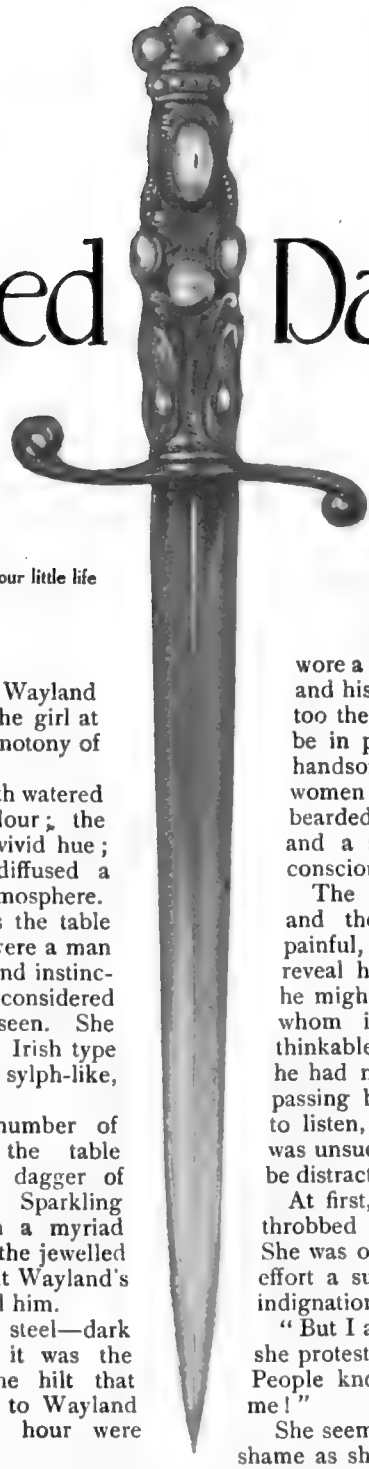
The Jewelled Dagger



"... We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded by a sleep."

By E. A. Morphy.

I.

What especially impressed Wayland—apart from the beauty of the girl at the table—was the lurid monotony of red.

The walls were covered with watered silk of a deep poppy-colour; the hangings were of the same vivid hue; the crimson lampshades diffused a similar tone into the very atmosphere.

Facing each other across the table in the centre of the room were a man and a girl. The man Wayland instinctively disliked. The girl he considered the loveliest he had ever seen. She was of the characteristically Irish type—blue-eyed, dark-haired, sylph-like, exquisite.

Resplendent among a number of lesser ornaments upon the table between them, gleamed a dagger of uncommon workmanship. Sparkling incessantly, iridescing with a myriad facets of translucent glory, the jewelled handle of the weapon caught Wayland's observant eye and enthralled him.

The blade was of blue steel—dark and very venomous. But it was the malignant loveliness of the hilt that seemed to glitter a warning to Wayland that the place and the hour were pregnant with tragedy.

The man, who seemed alternately to smirk and cower under the lash of the girl's scorn, wore a number of rings on his fingers, and his evening clothes were a trifle too theatrical in cut and trimming to be in precise good form. He was handsome in the way that some women like men to be—a neatly bearded Apollo, with crisp, curly hair and a supercilious attitude of self-conscious grace.

The discussion between the girl and the man was intermittent but painful, and, as Wayland dared not reveal his presence lest by so doing he might compromise a fourth person whom it would be absolutely unthinkable to betray, he was glad that he had not heard much of what was passing between them. He tried not to listen, not to watch, but in this he was unsuccessful. His mind refused to be distracted from the menace of danger.

At first, the girl spoke in tones that throbbed with suppressed emotion. She was obviously mastering by a great effort a surging outburst of passionate indignation.

"But I am your proclaimed *fiancée!*" she protested. "I am your betrothed! People know that I have let you kiss me!"

She seemed to shrivel with disgust and shame as she whispered the final accusation. Instinctively, she raised a filmy wisp of handkerchief to her cheek as though to

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wipe off the very memory of a caress that was defiling.

Wayland felt himself blush as he listened.

"And now you would jilt me!"

She laughed quietly but hysterically.

"*You!*" she repeated, with withering scorn and increasing anger. "*You* would jilt *me!*"

The man grinned nervously.

There was a pause. The girl gasped for breath, and glared at the man with eyes that glittered in helpless fury.

The man came stealthily around the table towards her, shrugging his shoulders as one who argues with an invincible fool. He had nerved himself for this ordeal, and was going to make an end of it.

"'Let us shake hands and part!'" he quoted flippantly. "'We can at least be friends!' Eh?"

Wayland felt that in another moment he must spring up and choke him.

Alternately cowering and smirking, the man advanced a step nearer.

The girl gasped again. Something seemed to snap. Swift as light her right hand snatched the dagger from the table.

In a flash it was over.

The girl was reeling backwards with both hands clasped to her eyes. The man was staggering blindly, brutishly. A chair overturned under him; his clutch tore the cloth and its load of *bric-à-brac* from the table. Red froth bubbled from his mouth. The jewelled hilt of the dagger stuck out gleaming against the snowy background of his shirt-front. The point of it was buried in his heart.

Then Wayland awoke.

II.

East or west, in none of the Five Continents, on none of the Seven Seas, lived a man less likely to dream, or be moved by a dream than Peter Wayland. But on this occasion he sat up in bed and turned on the electric light.

There was no trace of deception anywhere—no hint of trickery. Wayland was in his own room, his own bed. But his body and mind were alike a-quiver with the oppressively tangible reality of the girl in the red room, the murdered man, and the jewelled dagger.

He lay down and tried to go to sleep again, but failed. He got up and took a drink and went back to bed again, and shut his eyes in a resolute endeavour to forget all about the business, but he remained awake until morning. Whatever way he turned for days afterwards, he was haunted by the beautiful face of the girl with the blue eyes, and the ghastly horror of the final tragedy.

Wayland knew that had he ever met a girl with that sort of face in his own set, he would have fallen utterly in love with her. He hoped, therefore, that he would not meet such a girl, because, though heart-whole and fancy-free, he knew that some day he would be expected to conform to the desires of his family and the traditions of his race, and marry his cousin, Edith Sandys.

Edith was a very charming girl—blonde, jolly, lovable, and with a fortune as attractive as his own. He would always like Edith, and she would always like him, too, and there would be dear little children of whom they would both be very proud. But there would not be anything that savoured too deeply of romance about it all. There would be no straining of heart-strings. Everything would be very pleasant, and very even, and very *comme il faut*.

Wayland often wondered how Edith would explain the existence of this hauntingly beautiful dream-murderess if he told her about it, and once or twice he nearly broached the subject to her. On each occasion, however, tact supervened. He kept his dream and its memory to himself.

One day he was again considering the matter. It was at afternoon tea in the Sandys' house, and the drawing-room was rather packed with the crush of Mrs. Sandys' callers.

At the moment the idea occurred to him he was holding his cup and saucer in one hand and passing the cake to Edith Sandys with the other. The girl suddenly stopped with her hand poised above the piece of cake. Her merry eyes brightened joyously.

"Oh, there's Mary Dillon!" she exclaimed.

Wayland looked round, and let his tea-cup fall with a crash in his amazement.

Exquisitely gowned, lovelier far than any memory of his dream had ever limned her, the girl of the scarlet room was emerging from the crowd and advancing with gladly outstretched hands to Edith Sandys.

The drawing-room seemed to spin on one corner and turn poppy-red.

The wonderful blue-grey eyes of the dream-girl glanced at him quizzically from under their long black lashes, and flashed an intelligent question at Miss Sandys. She had evidently heard of the family hopes concerning a possible alliance between Edith and Wayland, and her eyes told his cousin

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that she approved the choice of Fate. A dimple stole into one cheek elusively, fluttered there for a second, then faded away hurriedly.

Wayland thought his heart would stop beating. The judgments of men differ widely as to what constitutes the acme of human loveliness, but Wayland, who knew he had good taste, realised that, for him at all events, this was the most beautiful creature the world ever saw.

Yet between him and the woman lay a blood-stained dagger with a glittering hilt of jewels. By her side—as a shadow—a murdered man staggered to the floor.

"Is there anything the matter, Peter?"

The voice of Miss Sandys recalled Wayland to himself.

"Do look nice, please—for your own sake. I want to introduce you to Mary Dillon."

Mary Dillon said "How do you do?" to Wayland, and presently passed on, leaving a reminiscence of bewildering beauty and a soft Irish brogue, in every way the antitheses of tragedy.

"She is a very wonderful girl," explained Miss Sandys, "and she is very rich, but I don't think she has ever been very happy."

Wayland said, "Oh, indeed!" in a manner so distantly courteous as to indicate that the matter was very sad but remotely impersonal. He no longer desired that Edith Sandys should ever hear about his dream.

"She never told me *all* about the rest of it," admitted Miss Sandys, "but I know that it was the wrong man that made love to her. I believe he is dead or something now!"

Wayland again nodded sagaciously. The situation worried him. He wanted to go away and think.

Gradually, and contrary to every prompting of his intelligence and instinct of self-preservation, he came to realise that the allurements of Mary Dillon's personality were overpowering his logical aversion. He was falling under the magical thrall of her beauty, and was beginning to forget about the dagger and the red room. He followed her hither and yon. He danced with her; he took her in to dinner. Places that he went to, and from which she was absent, seemed desolate.

Wayland knew all about the moth and the flame, and he realised the folly of his own predicament in seeking the society of a girl whose past he felt to be a blot, but Henley week saw him a guest at the same house-party on the river, and he had sought the invitation because he knew that Mary Dillon was to be there.

It was in the evening, after the first day's races. The river was very wonderful, the moon was very fair. They sat together in a punt, drifting silently, happily, in a backwater among the shadows. Wayland was watching her almost breathlessly.

"I suppose," said he, when the silence began to press upon his folly, "I suppose you know you are very beautiful."

The girl leant forward and clasped her hands over her knees. She looked into the face of Peter Wayland as one who seeks a sign, and Wayland felt his heart sinking.

"I have been told," she replied, "that I am not ill-looking!"

The picture of the jewelled dagger flamed before Wayland's eyes.

"Beware!" it seemed to say. The menace of it heartened Wayland, and the girl's eyes questioned him.

"Does he still tell you so?" asked Wayland with dry lips. "I suppose you mean some man told you, as I have done. Does he still tell you so? Has anyone the right to tell you so?"

The girl looked calmly at Wayland and beyond him. She did not sigh audibly, but the man noted that for a couple of seconds she held her breath as one does who suppresses a sigh or an exclamation.

"No," she said, presently. "He does not tell me so any more. To tell you the truth, I think he grew to fancy that he had been mistaken. You see, I am very candid with you, Mr. Wayland. And, somehow, I wish that he had been candid with me!"

The unfathomable eyes looked into Wayland's very coldly.

"But my mirror tells me I am not ill to look upon, and——"

Wayland raised an imploring hand.

"I am sorry"! he muttered. "I couldn't help asking you. Won't you please forgive me? I could not, indeed!"

The girl smiled graciously.

"There is no need to apologise, Mr. Wayland!" she assured him. "You paid me a very nice compliment. I will reward you by telling you that the only man who ever paid me many such compliments, the man I was engaged to, I mean"—she spoke coldly and incisively—"is dead. I do not think that it is likely that I shall ever again permit myself to enjoy similar compliments. You understand me?"

Her voice softened relentingly. The brogue purred on her tongue. She seemed

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The girl was reeling backwards with both hands clasped to her eyes. The man was staggering blindly, brutishly. . . . The jewelled hilt of the dagger stuck out gleaming against the snowy background of his shirt-front. *(Page 339, col. 1.)*

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to be rather sorry for Peter Wayland as an individual, but glad that she had spoken bitterly to him as a man.

"I understand," said he.

She nodded.

Another punt glided past them, and they were silent until it had faded into the darkness.

"Is there anything else you would like to ask me?" she said.

Wayland looked at the girl. She sat with an expression that suggested the bravado of nerves unstrung.

"There is one other thing I should like to ask you, if I may," said he. "It is a very nonsensical question, and may seem to you very far-fetched, but it is one that greatly concerns me."

Miss Dillon raised her eyebrows in a gesture of astonished inquiry.

"Did you ever own a dagger with a jewelled handle?"

The girl took her hands from her face. Wayland fancied she went pale, but in the moonlight it was difficult to tell. Anyhow, it was plain to him that the question was as disconcerting as it was unexpected.

"It was a very remarkable sort of dagger," he blurted on. "A big emerald at the top of the handle, then——"

"I know the dagger you mean," she interrupted. "I have it with me here in Henley. It was given to me by the man that is dead. I did not think anyone knew anything about it. Please take me home!"

III.

Wayland dreamt that night of human vampires with unfathomable eyes of blueygrey, and he awoke in the morning wondering if the river-trip that preceded the nightmare were really only part of the dream.

But he knew that such was not the case. He could still see the startled look in her eyes when he mentioned the dagger; he could still hear her warm brogue emphasising the cold announcement: "My mirror tells me I am not ill to look upon!"—he could still smell the perfume of violets that clung to her white frock.

A weird and disreputable idea entered the mind of Peter Wayland.

He must search her room for that dagger!

She would not let him describe it to her fully in the punt. She had shut him up peremptorily and asked him to take her back to the house. Maybe it was a different dagger altogether. Maybe the tragedy of the scarlet room was, after all, only a dream!

In that case a rose-coloured world would hem in the path through which he and Mary Dillon would wander, hand in hand, to Paradise.

So Wayland framed neat excuses, and when the others took to the river, he remained upon the lawn.

Thereafter he returned to the house—ostensibly to write letters, but in reality to satisfy or kill for ever the doubt that he now felt dragging at his heart and gnawing at his brain.

The house was empty save for himself. The servants were on the lawn or down the river. Before ever starting upon his quest, however, Wayland already felt like a convicted thief. That was a mere bagatelle. He had to be convinced of Mary Dillon's guilt or innocence.

He opened the door of her room stealthily, afraid of the sound of his own footsteps in the broad light of a July day. He held his breath and peered about furtively. The room was pretty—ordinary. There were a couple of vases with flowers in them to brighten the simplicity of the furniture. There was no dagger anywhere.

Wayland noted everything—the orderly bed, the big trunks, the wardrobe, the dressing-table.

On the last mentioned there were many fallals and boxes and cases and bottles such as women carry about with them, and one oblong leather case looked as if it could hold the dagger of the tragedy. It was an ordinary sort of silver-mounted green Russia leather glove-box that a girl would be likely to fill with anything but gloves. Wayland sucked his dry lips as he contemplated it from a distance. Then he crept over to it, very gently, very slowly, treading softly on tip-toe.

He picked up the case, and felt the weight of it. Loud cried his heart to him: "You are thieving in Mary Dillon's room! Cad!"

He cowered, but still he clutched the case to him.

"Open it!" prompted reason, "and know the truth!"

Wayland pressed the silver catch, and raised the cover.

Glittering against the green velvet, venomous in its scintillant splendour, lay the jewelled dagger of the red room.

Wayland's face went grey. Slowly, mechanically, he closed the lid, and let the box drop to the table. His danger, his shame, were forgotten. Huddling himself up on to his knees he rested his head in his arms.

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"Heavens!" said he. "It's true!"

The lock of the door clicked.

"Mr. Wayland!"

Wayland staggered to his feet like a drunken man who has been shot.

"Mr. Wayland!"

Standing with her back to the door, her accusing eyes ablaze with scorn and amazement, Mary Dillon watched him.

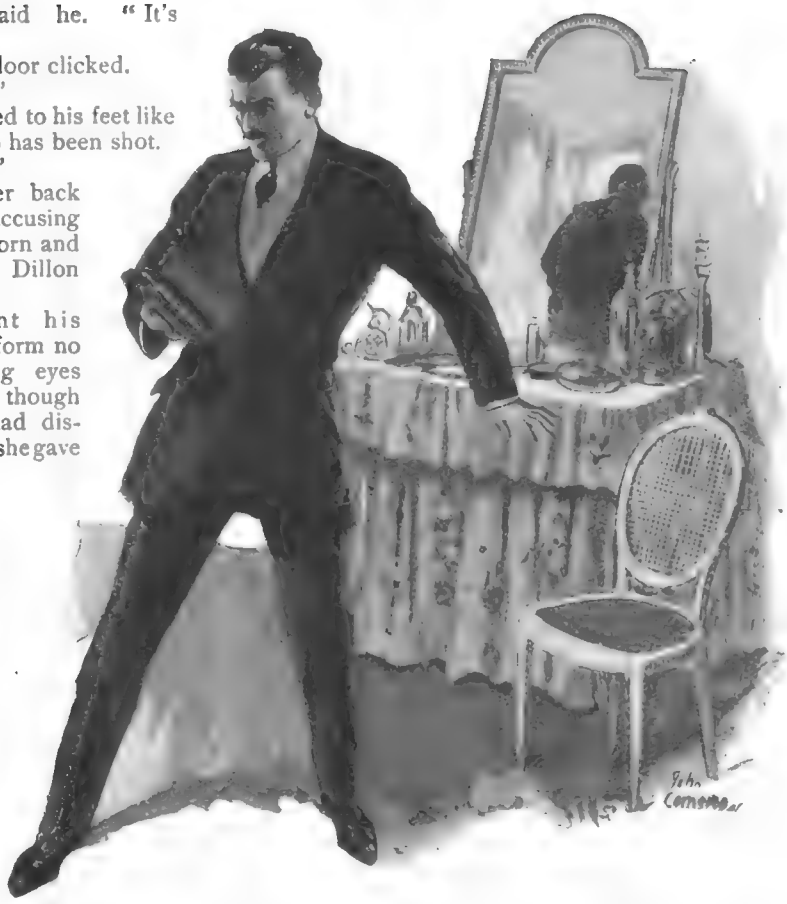
For a moment his parched lips could form no word. His staring eyes gaped at her, but though she saw that he had discovered the dagger, she gave no sign of fear.

"I could not help it!" he muttered. "I could not believe it! I had to come and see!"

A look of bewildered mystification came into the blue eyes of Miss Dillon.

"You could not believe what, Mr. Wayland?" she asked, a trifle more kindly.

"The murder! The dagger!" gasped Wayland. "You were so very beautiful! I will never betray you! I saw it all in a dream!"



Glittering against the green velvet, venomous in its scintillant splendour, lay the jewelled dagger of the red room.

Lilting a ripple of laughter, silvery as the song of the mating blackbird, Mary Dillon raised both hands to her breast.

"Murder, Mr. Wayland!" she ejaculated merrily. "Me a murderess! Oh, you silly man!"

The grey went out of Wayland's face. It flushed with unspeakable gladness.

"I don't care whether you think me a thief or not, Mary!" said he. "But I love you better than all the world, and you know it!"

It was Miss Dillon who went pale.

"I thought—I thought——" she began.

"I don't mind what you thought!" broke in Wayland. "I've told you the truth, Mary! I thought you murdered the man with the dagger, but nobody that did murder could laugh your laugh! May I love you?"

Mary Dillon looked up at Peter Wayland. She said nothing, but Peter caught her up in his arms and covered her face with kisses, and she seemed content.

In due time he took his arms away, and told her the dream of the red room and the girl and the man and the jewelled dagger.

Again she laughed, and this time she crooned as well as laughed.

"Tell me, Peter," said she, "were you at the Academy this year?"

Wayland, deeply mystified, admitted having been at the opening function, but also confessed to having seen nothing but the people in the crush.

"Oh, but I beg your pardon!" corrected Miss Dillon. "You must have seen one picture painted by the man who gave me the dagger—the man who is dead. It was called 'The Red Tragedy,' and I posed for the jilted girl."

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MAKING the BEST of LIFE

By
Mr. Optimist.

This is my second talk with readers of the ROYAL, but as some of you may not have read the first I should like to explain that the Editor has asked me to have a little chat with you every month about making the best of things, and, if possible, to help you do so.

THANKS FOR HELPING.

Before tackling my subject once again in real earnest, I must occupy a line or two of the valuable space which Mr. Editor spares me in thanking all of my readers who have helped me with their suggestions. Evidently this new feature of the Royal is going to be a big success. My readers want to make the very best of their lives and are going to let me help them do so. Good! Now that we are beginning to understand one another we shall get along famously. But don't be in too much of a hurry to see your suggestions set forth in bold print for the world to read. Owing to the enormous number of Royal Magazines that Mr. Printer has to manufacture to satisfy you all, we have to go to press long before the day of publication. Hence I have to save my notices of letters responding to the July article until September.

A CASE REQUIRING INVESTIGATION.

A girl cousin of mine—no, don't grin, she really is a cousin—earns 25s. a week as a clerk. She lives board free with her parents, but has to pay all her personal expenses. Another friend, a banker's daughter, gets an allowance of £3 a week from her father by way of pin-money, as she calls it. Yet she is always desperately hard up, the greatest contrast in the world to my cousin, who invariably seems well dressed and has silver in her pocket to spare. Here is one girl "making the best of life" with less than half the cash available to the other.

My cousin.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

Clearly this was an opportunity for Mr. Optimist to investigate on behalf of Royal readers, so for a while I kept these two young people under observation. But not for long. The reason proved to be the simplest in the world. My cousin carefully invested her weekly earnings in the things she really wanted, while the banker's daughter squandered her allowance directly she got it upon things for which she had no use at all. What's the good of working hard or planning hard to make money if we are going to get little or no happiness out of the spending of it?

Buying things she really wanted.

THE ART OF SPENDING.

Just imagine a man, for example, toiling hard for two days to earn a sovereign and then spending it on something that's no use. Ridiculous, isn't it?—yet you and I are doing similar things every day of our lives unless we are very careful. How often, dear reader, have you and I come back with some precious purchase, and just as we reached home remembered something which we needed about five times as badly and which we

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Spending on something that's no use.

would now have to do without? Well, I screwed up my courage one evening and asked my cousin just precisely how she managed to squeeze so much comfort and happiness out of 25s. a week. She opened her silver mesh bag. "You see that little notebook?" and she pointed to it. "In that I keep a list of everything I want in what I call the order of *badness* of wanting it. *And when I go shopping I take the book with me.*"

DIVINE DISCONTENT.

Discontent is a dull, unhappy sort of word, and even the adjective "divine" hardly makes it sound attractive. But, nevertheless, it is one of the most important things in the world. Extract every ounce of happiness and enjoyment out of what you possess by all means; but don't be content with it. That would be mere existence. Those of us who can feel the red blood pulsing through our veins want to do more than exist. We want to live. And if we want to live we must be soaring constantly higher and still higher in the direction of our ambition.

GET OFF YOUR NEST.

Success does not happen. It results from intelligent planning and hard work. The world bids high for ability and pays promptly—but not in advance. Before you can make it come down with the coin you must deliver the goods. An old fable tells of an ambitious pullet that saw an industrious old hen lay an egg and resolved to do likewise. But the old hen, when she saw the pullet, merely smiled and said, "My dear, before you lay an egg you must have an egg inside you." Then the pullet got off the nest, hustled round for egg material, and very soon became the champion producer of the barn-yard.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF IT.

When more than eighty years of age, Gladstone found his chief satisfaction in the knowledge that his life had known no idleness. Work is the chief business of life. God and Nature have both ordained it. What folly, then, to seek contentment and happiness in a life that is not filled with striving!

What are you worth from the neck up?

"Do you know why Satan is so successful?" demanded a street corner preacher. "It is because he works all the time, and I am even tempted to admire him for the way he attends to business." Work with your body, but, above all, work with your brain. While one man is earning a pound a week with his body another is earning a pound a day with his brain, and doing it ever so much more easily. What are you worth from the neck up? That's a question worth pondering.

OUGHT WE TO BE CONTENTED?

Answer: No! But stop a minute. Is that quite right? The proverbial "three acres and a cow" has a suggestion of idyllic contentment in some rural retreat. Then there are the subtle clevernesses of people who urge that "Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed." In our youth we received much admonition from people older than ourselves about being meek and not coveting, and so forth. The old, old problem comes out and harasses us at all times. Are we more profitably occupied in trying to be contented with what we have or in striving continually for something better?

"Blessed is he who expecteth nothing."

WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE?

Surely from your own experience you have some little wrinkle that has helped you to get more out of life, that you would share with fellow-readers of the ROYAL? If so, why not take a sheet of note-paper, or even a postcard, and send it along? "If thou hast knowledge let others light their candle at it." On the other hand, if you want advice concerning your career, or in connection with your sports, your recreations, your hobbies, or anything, in fact, that affects your earnings and your daily happiness, please consult your friend,

Mr. Optimist.

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All On Account of Dainty

Concerning the Curious Quest of Aunt Cora.

By Dorothy Rose.

Bang!

A boot flew across the landing and found its mark on the door of Number 7, flung by the accustomed hand of Number 7A, who paused in his consumption of coffee and bacon to send out the recognised summons for aid.

Number 7 responded with a promptitude laudable in a medical student who was given to the burning of midnight oil, and had only just struggled into dressing-gown and slippers. Indeed, Tom Hudson was not unused to such appeals from his irresponsible friend, who received him with consternation writ large on his frank, boyish face.

Hudson sank his lean figure into an opulent armchair and regarded his chum with tolerant, questioning eyes.

"What's the row?" he demanded. "Dainty eloped with a duke, or have you promised to take two girls out to lunch on the same day?"

"Worse!" Ted Barnett rumpled his unruly black locks as he perched himself, regardless of the proximity of the coffee-pot and butter-dish, on the breakfast table. "Aunt Cora's coming up—she's on her way now, and what's more, intends to stay with me in this flat."

"Entirely natural!" Hudson nodded as he refilled his pipe. "No doubt she wants to see that you are not overworking," he added banteringly.

"Don't rot, old chap!" Ted's eyes were troubled—they were nice eyes, intensely blue, and added to a charming smile had an appeal which few people could resist. "I know I was an awful ass to chuck the hospital, but I simply loathe the idea of carving people up, and the nurses were such a dreary lot, whereas I *can* sing, and the girls at The Bijou are top-hole."

"I'm afraid that won't seem to Miss Barnett sufficient excuse for forfeiting your chances of Harley Street to play small parts in musical comedy," observed his friend.

"I know." Ted swung his legs recklessly, the very picture of gloom. For the first time since the footlights wooed him from the hospital he saw clearly the error of his ways. Of course, he ought to have told Aunt Cora, but then she hated the theatre and always crossed the road when she came to one. After all, she had always promised to pay his expenses while he was training for a career, and what were the odds to her if the money, instead of going in books and fees,

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went in living up to the giddy pinnacle of elegance decreed by the theatrical profession?

All the same, Ted owned to himself that she would have some cause for complaint; there would be the dickens of a row and, well—it would certainly be a pity if her money went to a Cats' Home or any of the other charities in which she was interested.

"She's bound to find out," observed Ted, pacing the room and kicking an unoffending hassock out of his path. "The boys are always popping in, and as for Murray Payne, he simply lives here since he read *Honeypots*. Seems to think if he comes often enough I shall find the £500 he wants me to plank down before he'll produce it, under the sofa cushions or in the grate."

"Choke 'em off, my boy," advised his friend.

"I might manage it," agreed Ted, "but even then what about the flat? I ask you in all good faith does this room look like the abode of a hard-working medical student?"

He took up his stand before the fire and waved a despairing hand round the room with its effusively-signed photos of pretty actresses, its Chesterfield littered with cushions, and the piles of music that stood on the piano.

"It does *not*," returned Hudson, "unless his entire female relatives happened to adorn the stage, and he himself did all his studying at the nearest Reference Library. There doesn't seem to be a book in the place."

"I could borrow yours, of course, and strew 'em round," pursued Ted, "but——"

"Of course, you could." Hudson got up, and stood beside his chum, his lean, scholarly face and dreamy brown eyes a striking contrast to Ted's debonair countenance and air of boyish irresponsibility. "Then you can come and dig with me and let the old lady have your flat—we'll fix it up till it looks like a first cousin to the British Museum."

"Corking idea! What a brick you are, Tom!" Ted smote his friend gratefully on the back. "We must let Mrs. Murphy into the secret—tell her not to mention the stage business—but she's Irish enough to appreciate the joke." Mrs. Murphy was the red-haired daughter of Erin who cooked and did for 7 and 7A, and ruled the occupants for their good with the aid of an ever-ready tongue and motherly heart.

"Mrs. Murphy will assuredly burst her last two buttons over it," agreed Hudson, smiling. "I'll just go and sling some books and instruments across the landing before I go to the hospital. You remove those giddy photos and shove some of that music out of sight."

"The only thing that worries me now," said Ted meditatively, "is how the deuce I am to account for my absence when I hook it for the theatre each night. Think I shall tell Aunt Cora I'm a valued ornament at the Y.M.C.A. or that I've taken to slumming; she's great on district visiting and missionary work and thinks all missionaries should be buried in Westminster Abbey," he concluded as he rang the bell for Mrs. Murphy.

Ted spent most of the day in evolving futile plans for the acquiring of the £500 demanded by Murray Payne before he would put on his play, and in rhapsodising to Dainty Dimple, with whom he took tea, on the glory of the future which should be hers did *Honeypots* ever materialise. Whereat Dainty, who had a small part in *The Topaz Girl* at The Bijou, shook her auburn curls and flashed her violet eyes with such effect that Ted ordered more tea and muffins and dashed into the flat a bare ten minutes before Aunt Cora was due to arrive.

Aunt Cora arrived in company with a venerable black trunk and a collection of brown paper parcels which almost obscured her podgy little person. Blue-eyed and of florid complexion, she still retained a tithe of youthful good looks which she did her best to nullify by twisting her scant grey hair into a tight knot and clothing herself in raiment of hideous hue and extreme shapelessness.

The flat pleased her. Mrs. Murphy, who had wrought well and faithfully with broom and duster and exchanged her blue check apron for one of creaky starchiness, served up an appetising little dinner. Aunt Cora, garbed in stony purple, commended the tomato soup, the while she dished up for her nephew's benefit the latest gossip of Slowford. Like many people who dwell in the wilderness, Aunt Cora imagined her native village the centre of the universe, and the curate's toothache was to her a more epoch-making event than the death of a reigning monarch.

"The poor vicar's in trouble," she continued—"such a dear man and has such good taste in hymns—in fact, it's partly on his account that I came up to town."

"What's wrong with the old chap?" Ted looked at his watch and glanced significantly at his friend, who responded with a heartless grin.

"It's like this, my dear"—Aunt Cora's

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voice sank to a mysterious whisper—"he is a widower with one daughter—perhaps if her mother had lived it would not have happened—red hair never did seem to me respectable——"

"What's she done? Eloped with the old Squire or gone to Salt Lake City?" inquired Ted, wondering what was the shortest possible time in which he could make up and hurl himself into the resplendent naval uniform he wore in the first act of *The Topaz Girl*.

"Worse," replied his aunt, shaking her grey head dismally. "It's a thing I don't care to discuss, but—she's *gone on the stage*."

"And left the sewing meetings in the lurch! Too bad!" commented Hudson, with the dry smile that always puzzled Aunt Cora immensely.

"We have reason to believe"—the good lady's manner was that of one disclosing the whereabouts of a murderer—"that she is in one of those dreadful musical comedies. Ruth is my god-daughter, but it is for her father's sake that I have taken it upon myself to find her."

Ted's suggestion that actresses were as plentiful as street lamps, and that there were a good many theatres in London, did not daunt her.

"I shall go to them all." Aunt Cora's blue eyes flashed as she made her declaration of war. "I never thought to enter a theatre, but for the sake of that poor sorrowing father I will risk pollution. I must ask you, Ted, to assist me."

"Like a shot!" Ted put down his coffee-cup with a crash, his face alight with eagerness. "Better still, I'll see the whole thing through, that is if you've got a photo or anything to go by."

"I have a photo"—Aunt Cora rummaged in a capacious velvet bag, "but it's only an amateur one."

It *was*—excessively amateur, a mere smudge of a thing, but Ted perjured himself blithely and declared he would recognise the face anywhere, and expressed his willingness to visit every haunt of musical comedy to track down the erring damsel.

Aunt Cora accepted his offer with a gratitude that would have been considerably lessened had she known that it was the outcome of a desire to find an excuse for absenting himself from her presence every evening.

"You'll be able to recognise her," she pursued. "Red hair, remember, and—but, of course, her name will be on the programme—Ruth Trafford."

Ted, already struggling into his coat, suggested that it was not unusual for girls to change their name when embarking upon a stage career, but Aunt Cora fell upon him with heat.

"Naturally Ruth would be only too glad of the standing her name would give her," she observed, with touching faith in the power of a country vicar's name to melt the hearts of theatrical managers. "Remember, I'll spare no expense; red hair and a mole under her left ear," she called after him as he clattered down the stairs.

Ted parried his aunt's questions next morning with great adroitness, gave a graphic account of an imaginary visit to *The Crown Princess*, and a vain search for red hair and the spotless name of Trafford. Unhappily, Aunt Cora waxed curious with regard to her nephew's progress at the hospital, and it was only the timely intervention of Tom Hudson, who took upon himself to conceal his friend's ignorance, that saved Ted from exposure.

Evening saw him departing once more, ostensibly to seek the erring maiden among the ranks of beauty in *Keep to the Right*, in reality to ornament the stage of The Bijou, and abuse Murray Payne for insisting on £500 down before springing such a simple comedy as *Honeypots* on a confiding public.

By absenting himself most of the day—presumably at the hospital—and never appearing in his aunt's presence without a ponderous volume under his arm, Ted managed to deceive the good lady completely, while his zeal in the cause of reclaiming Ruth Trafford won him golden opinions.

As the days wore on, however, and he still reported failure, Aunt Cora began to grow restive, and to show a desire to raid the theatres on her own account. And then, just as things were becoming what Ted described as "deuced awkward," the affair came to a climax.

It happened that Ted—secure in the belief that Aunt Cora, who kept strictly virtuous hours, was safely in bed—was giving a small but lively supper-party in the privacy of his chum's flat—Tom being detained late at the hospital. Dainty was there, more charming than ever, in a speedwell blue gown that set off her apple blossom cheeks and auburn hair to perfection, noisily companioned by Daphne Dash and Gladys Giddy, both Bijou beauties of extreme vivaciousness, who sparred with two gilded youths who apparently existed for no other purpose. Murray Payne, a restless cock sparrow of a man,

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Supper was nearly over and the fun was at its height when the door opened and there on the threshold stood Aunt Cora.

was of the party, while his wife, pretty and easy-going, made a pleasantly unobtrusive chaperone.

Ted was in the best of spirits. Payne was steadily complimentary as to *Honeypots*, and Dainty had never been so alluring. A certain quality of winsomeness and simplicity struck him anew beside the studied attractiveness of her two companions.

Supper was nearly over and the fun was at its height when the door opened and there on the threshold stood Aunt Cora, resplendent in bead-trimmed gown and an enormous lace collar, her watery blue eyes blinking in the glare of the electric light.

For a moment she stood gazing blankly from Ted's stricken countenance to the pretty, flushed face of Dainty, whose violet eyes held surprise not untinged with recognition. Then she advanced into the room, a smile of satisfaction on her round and rubicund face.

"So you've found her at last! My dear boy, how glad I am! I've been to a Missionary Congress, and just as I got out of the taxi—he charged me 2s. 10d.; I'm sure it was too much—I saw you and Ruth in front of me. I just had my supper—a glass of milk and two lunch biscuits—and then I came across to congratulate you. Ruth, my dear child, how overjoyed your dear father will be!" and the good soul clasped the astonished girl in a tearful and podgy embrace.

Dainty returned the caress with a little tremulous laugh, while Ted stood as one petrified, his empty wine glass dangling precariously in his hand.

"My dear aunt," he said, "I think there has been some mistake. Allow me to introduce Miss Dainty Dimple of The Bijou Theatre."

"Dainty Dimple, indeed!" Aunt Cora tossed her head. "Not content with forsaking your father, you must needs give up your name—the name of a good Christian gentleman—and call yourself some newfangled, heathenish name that isn't even in the dictionary."

"It's quite true." Dainty divided her most bewitching smile between Ted and his aunt. "I am Ruth Trafford; I only changed my name because of my father's prejudice against the stage."

"Prejudice!" Aunt Cora's eyes swept the company with a look of horror. "And these, I suppose, are your friends, poor deluded child? To think that a nephew of mine should keep such company," and she closed her eyes as though the dazzling finery

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of Bijou beauties and the immaculate garb of their cavaliers were a sight too awful to contemplate.

"But, my dear aunt"—Ted had by this time recovered his balance sufficiently to improvise—"you are quite mistaken. My friends, Mr. Murray Payne, the Hon. Guy Garters, and Sir Cyril Sideshows are co-members with me of the C.O.S.S.—the Come Off the Stage Society—which does such splendid work in persuading girls to abandon the stage. It is hard work, but we persevere, don't we, old man?" slapping the Hon. Guy vigorously on the back.

"We do!" the young man responded with feeling—he had already proposed to the fair Daphne seven times without success.

"Lots of the hospital chaps belong to it," pursued Ted, inspired to further efforts by the interest of his relative.

"Who's the treasurer?" his aunt demanded, whipping out a notebook and producing a pencil from her bag.

Ted ruffled his dark locks in perplexity. "Oh, er—oh, Hudson's the treasurer," he blurted out, pouncing on the first name that came into his head.

Aunt Cora nodded benevolently, and made a note in her book.

Not until they had vanished did Aunt Cora demand of Ted particulars of what she called his "very persevering conduct," and urge him to use all his efforts to persuade Dainty to leave the stage at once.

"If you succeed, my boy, you may ask me anything in moderation and it shall be yours," she promised rashly. "Come now, is there anything you specially want just at the moment?"

"There is!" Ted's blue eyes held a calculating light. "I want five hundred pounds."

"My dear Edward!"

"I know it seems a lot," replied her nephew, "but it'll be a stiff job. I don't mind telling you that if I can't pull it off, nobody can, for Dainty is a girl of spirit. Five hundred pounds will be just what I want for the pursuit of—my—career, and, after all, it's surely worth that to save a beautiful girl, the daughter of a clergyman, from the pitfalls of stage life?"

So he coaxed and threatened, playing on his aunt's abhorrence of the stage and her fears for the girl's future, till the old lady, gratified at his interest in his profession, yielded reluctantly, and went to bed, leaving Ted doing a war-dance of delight round the room.

It was with a blithe and buoyant countenance that Ted broke in next day upon his aunt's afternoon knitting to announce the fact that Dainty had yielded to his eloquence, and had promised to come to tea and make her formal resignation of the stage.

Dainty appeared simultaneously with the best china, a charming vision in a dove-grey costume and an absurd little velvet hat set bewitchingly on her auburn hair. Aunt Cora evidently regarded her as a brand plucked from the burning, and treated her with a pained resignation that somewhat marred the girl's enjoyment of the tea and bewildering array of confectionery provided by Ted, who, with a cheque for five hundred pounds in his pocket-book, had been more than usually lavish.

"Of course, now that you see the error of your ways, your dear father will be only too glad to welcome you home," Aunt Cora remarked, as Dainty nibbled a chocolate *éclair*. "He is a most forgiving man, and I'm sure his socks must want mending. I am going home on Friday and you shall come with me.

"I can quite understand," continued Aunt Cora placidly, "that you feel a little diffident about returning after your—very extraordinary behaviour, I feel sure, however, that for the dear vicar's sake, everyone will receive you in a spirit of Christian forgiveness. You can be ready by Friday, I suppose?"

"I'm afraid not. You see—don't be angry—I shall come down to Slowford later, but just at present—" she glanced appealingly at her lover, who set down his cup with a bang and flung himself into the breach.

"Fact is, Aunt Cora," he confessed, standing before her with a new quiet resolution in his eyes, "Dainty can't go home for good. She's going to marry me."

Aunt Cora dropped two stitches and made no attempt to pick them up. "So that was why you were so sure of being able to persuade her to leave the stage," she snorted. "And how, may I ask, do you propose to support a wife—rates and taxes, and bacon 1s. 1d. a pound as it is now? You can't do it on what I allow you."

"Shouldn't attempt it," responded her nephew. "But we *can* live on £6 a week, which is what I am earning at present."

Aunt Cora was still rallying her forces for a reply when the door opened to admit Tom Hudson, perplexity writ large in his dark eyes, and an envelope in his hand.

"Most extraordinary thing has happened,"

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"I can quite understand," continued Aunt Cora placidly, "that you feel a little diffident about returning after your—very extraordinary behaviour."

he said. "A letter came for me to the hospital this morning addressed to 'Mr. Thomas Hudson, Treasurer of the Come Off the Stage Society,' and inclosing a ten pound note to assist in our noble work. Never heard of the society, and the letter is anonymous, so I can't get to the bottom of it," and Tom held it out to his chum. "Wish I knew who sent it."

Ted took it, and went off into fits of laughter.

"I can tell you, young man," Aunt Cora declared in level tones. "*I* sent it. Perhaps Ted will explain matters, since he gave me particulars of the society," and she fixed a stony stare on her still giggling nephew.

It was Dainty who with pretty insistence took matters into her own hands, and as tactfully as might be put Aunt Cora in possession of the facts of the case—Ted's desertion of the hospital, his ambitions as playwright, and his desire to keep his delinquencies secret until he had won success in his chosen career.

"But now his name is as good as made, for Murray Payne will produce the play as soon as possible, and I know it will be a success," she finished with sublime optimism.

"And all thanks to your £500!" put in Ted joyfully, his gratitude getting the better of his discretion.

"*My* £500!" It was the last straw. The deceit she might have pardoned, her nephew's choice of a career she might have tolerated, but that her money should be the means of producing a play—if it had been used to blow up Buckingham Palace she could not have been more furiously indignant.

It is to be recorded that Aunt Cora said many things totally out of keeping with the character of an elderly lady who presided over the Girls' Improvement Society, and read a collect every morning.

From that day to this she has ignored her nephew's existence, a state of things which Ted, a successful playwright and the happiest of husbands, contemplates with remarkable resignation.

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HOLIDAYS IN BOOKS.

By C. Arthur Pearson.

Stone walls do not make a prison for the soul. Not even blindness can do that. If in the past the minds and imaginations of the blind have been dwarfed and stunted we know the cause, and it only remains to remove it.

That is the work that the National Institute for the Blind, of 206 Great Portland Street, London, W., has set itself, with the help of the public, to accomplish.

Two or three months ago I appealed to the readers of this magazine to help the fund now being raised by the National Institute to cheapen embossed literature for the blind. By means of an illustrated leaflet, the urgent need for cheaper books and more books was pressed upon their attention, and I want now to express my gratitude to all those who, as a result of that appeal, have come to our aid.

Facing these words, the same illustrated leaflet appears again. There is a reason for this. I have received many letters from people who read my previous article in the Royal, and who found the leaflet already torn out. Those who wrote to me sent subscriptions in spite of this fact, but each individual copy of a magazine is read as a rule by many people, and it is probable that a good many willing subscribers, finding the leaflet gone, were deterred from helping us.

That is why I venture to ask those who have not helped us yet to help us now in this holiday month of August, when all the world is revelling in the loveliness of landscape and seascape. The great joy of beholding beautiful scenery is denied to the blind. Just as literature is the only lamp that can lighten their darkness, so it is the only change and the only holiday that can come into their narrow and monotonous lives.

The blind man's eyes are closed, but his mental vision is the more acute. He is ever hungry for new impressions, new knowledge, new food for his imagination. In books alone can he find these.

I ask in the leaflet opposite, "Which book will you buy for the blind man?" That question might have been put differently, and in this holiday season almost more appropriately, "Which *holiday* will you buy for the blind man?" For there is a holiday in every volume that is added to the library of the blind; each of the millions of volumes in the national literature has wonderful holiday possibilities for the great army of the sightless.

The joy that you feel when after months spent among bricks and mortar you behold again the blue of the sea and the green of the countryside is not keener than the joy you can give to the blind man by enlarging the pitifully small library of books at present at his disposal. It is hard to realise what is the fact—that of the lighter, which may be called the holiday, side of literature, only fifty novels have so far been stereotyped for the production of the embossed books which alone make reading possible for the blind.

Many blind people have read and re-read everything that has been printed for them; the advent of a new book marks a red letter day in their lives. The world they live in is so restricted that reading may, without exaggeration, be described as the greatest relaxation of the blind. With books made abundant and cheap, blindness can be robbed of one of its chief terrors.

The work the National Institute has mapped out for itself is to enlarge and amplify the cruelly meagre library of the blind, and to make reading matter for the blind community as a whole cheap and, when necessary, free.

I ask holiday-makers for their sympathy, and I want them of their generosity to make use of the leaflet opposite, and put a small tax on their holiday exchequer to give a holiday to the minds and souls of those who dwell in darkness.

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PICTURE PARAGRAPHS

The contents of Mr Holding's pockets, which far exceed the average schoolboy's collection.

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Photographs of an Interesting or Out-of-the-Way Nature. All Photographs should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

MOVING MADE EASY.

Mr. T. H. Holding might almost be said to imitate the snail and the tortoise, for he carries his home upon his back. He evi lently cares nothing for bulging pockets, for on a camping holiday he will carry a twelve-ounce silk tent, a waterproof ground sheet, a dozen aluminium pegs, a pillow, a down head pillow, a cooking pan, a porridge pan, a frying-pan, a stove, a two-gallon water bucket, a hairbrush and comb, looking-glass, a set of bags for sugar, oatmeal, bread, tea and coffee, and several other minor items, making a total weight of 6 lb. 13 oz. He says that he can walk quite comfortably with this load.

The explanation is that all the utensils fit into one another, and the remaining articles can be folded up into very small parcels.

Ready to move with home and furniture.

The tent, in which two persons can sleep.

Photos *Daily Mirror Studios.*

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Photo *Miss L. Henn.*

This tombstone is to be seen in a graveyard on the shore of Lough Erne.

A FIDDLER'S TOMBSTONE.

THIS curious and original tombstone, which is five feet in height, was erected in memory of a fiddler who fell out of a boat when returning from a "Wake."

This idea of depicting the dead man's profession suggests many possibilities.

ONE OF THE PRIZE-WINNERS.

THE coster's donkey is not the unhappy, ill-treated creature that some people imagine. The contented-looking animal shown in this picture was only one of many to be seen at the Costermongers' Donkey Show, an annual event promoted by Our Dumb Friends' League. This is one of the events of the season in the Coster world.

Photo *Daily Mirror Studios.*

A happy donkey with his "pearly" owner.

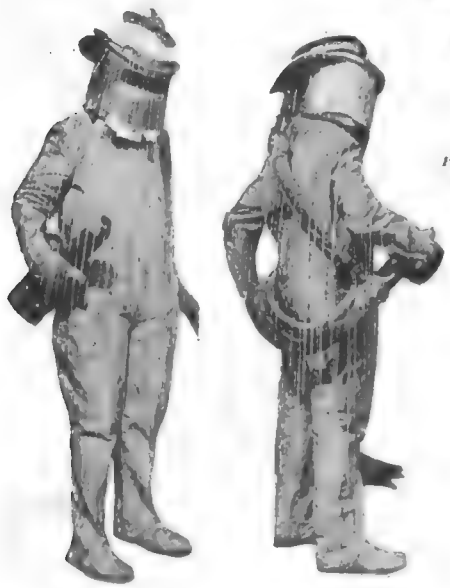

Photo *Fleet Agency.*

A suit which enables its owner to walk through fire.

A FIREPROOF SUIT.

THE inventor of this wonderful suit says that after standing in it for five minutes in the fierce flame of a coal, oil, and wood fire, he did not feel as warm as on a hot July day, the reason being that the wearer is enveloped from head to foot in cooling streams of water.

The suit is made of a double thickness of fireproof canvas, and between the two layers of suiting there is sewn at the neck a perforated ring, through which tiny streams of water are continually showered down in between the two layers

This water finds outlets at the finger tips and soles of the boots. A perforated ring also encircles the helmet, and acts as a shower bath.

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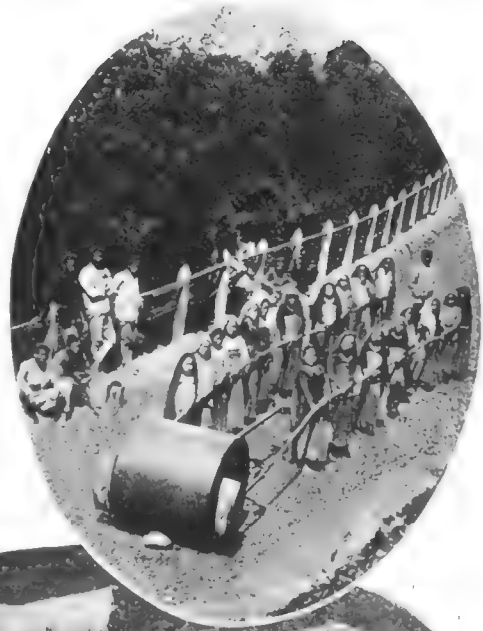
EQUALITY OF THE SEXES.

ALTHOUGH the picture would seem to contradict the title, in the Himalayas the rights between men and women are absolutely equal, both doing the same work.

For ordinary labourer's work they receive 3½d. a day, and are quite satisfied if they can get employment at this rate.

There are several races represented in this picture, including Nepalese, Thibetans, Bhotanese, and Sikkimese. Probably the men are resting while the women take their turn at rolling the road.

The women in this place are almost as strong as the men. It is interesting to wonder how they live on their pay; the cost of food and rent must be very low in this district.



A team of twenty women drawing a road roller on a Darjeeling highway

Photo, Underwood & Underwood

Photo *Daily Mirror.*

A Japanese carter evidently thinks more of protecting his horse's back than its head.

Photo *Daily Mirror.*

A Japanese workman building a fence of bamboo, which is used very largely for the purpose.

SCENES IN JAPAN.

THE Japanese workman shown in the picture building a fence bears his master's trade mark on his coat.

It will be noticed that he is wearing divided stockings, and the bamboo stick is fixed between his toes. He is engaged in building a fence round the Emperor's Burial Ground.

If trade union badges in this country were of this size the employers might well be excused for not allowing their workmen to wear them.

The Japanese carter is very considerate of his horse, but one feels that a straw sun-bonnet somewhat similar to his own would make the hot weather suit more complete, for, as everyone knows, the heat from the sun affects a horse's head considerably more than his back.

Not only does the horse wear a straw mat on his back, but his feet are also wrapped in straw.

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EXIT CLARENCE

"Oh, woman! In our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please!"

By
F. MORTON HOWARD.

THE boy and the girl stood looking at each other for five tense seconds which seemed like a sample of infinity. Though the sun shone warm and clear above them, their individual skies had abruptly become obscured by lowering clouds. The atmosphere about them was replete with unspoken antagonism, and this was because they had arrived at one of those junctures which novelists of an older day described ingeniously, if vaguely, as "psychological moments."

The girl had plainly precipitated the present crisis. She still looked a little defiant, but, woman-like, she preserved an attitude which implied that she did not recognise that she had said anything out of the ordinary.

The right of reply now rested with Master William Preece, and he already realised that he was not going to shine.

He crinkled his nose appallingly, so that it became a very epitome of scorn. Pointing a denunciatory forefinger, he ejaculated, with remarkable violence, the single word:

"*Flapper!*"

Miss Peggy Barker slanted her head a little sideways to regard him with a look almost of compassion.

"Schoolboy," she remarked.

"Better than being a flapper, anyhow," growled Billy Preece.

"Just a rude little schoolboy," amplified Miss Barker. She spoke equably and distinctly, rather as though she were elucidating him to a tepidly interested universe. "A rude little schoolboy, with carrotty hair and sandy eyebrows."

"Huh!" puffed Billy. "Anything else?"

"Yes," she said. "Freckles."

"I'm not rude and I'm not little," he began categorically. "I'm taller than you, if it comes to that, and I'm nearly two months older. And you didn't use to call my hair carrotty. And my eyebrows'll grow darker in time. And, if you particularly want to know about my freckles, I believe they'd have gone long ago if I hadn't tried that beastly stuff you made me rub on 'em. So now, then!"

"I'm afraid I haven't been listening," she said, with a most exasperating air of unconcern. "Say all that over again, will you?"

He made a despairing gesture, as if appealing to the heavens to bear witness how he restrained his impatience in the face of the greatest provocation.

"You were talking about your freckles, weren't you?" she reminded him sweetly.

The interview appeared to have reached an *impasse*. Master Preece, his hands crammed into the nethermost recesses of his coat pockets, glowered fiercely into the horizon. Miss Barker, tapping the toe of a buckled shoe on the pavement, affected a quite unconvincing interest in the passing traffic.

"Look here, all joking apart," urged Billy, almost desperately, "why can't I meet you this afternoon?"

"I've got another engagement," was the demure reply.

"Oh, rot! It's Saturday afternoon, and——"

He broke off, feeling that he had placed an unassailable case before her. Miss Barker made no reply, but gave him a temporary view

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of a big-bowed pig-tail as she turned her head to follow the course of a totally uninteresting motor-'bus.

Billy Preece stared at the pig-tail with a preoccupied, baleful glare.

"I know well enough what's up," he declared darkly.

"Oh, do you?" she asked. There was just a shade of uneasiness in her voice, and she watched the receding vehicle with an increased concentration of gaze.

"Clarence Alston!"

"Well, what about him?" demanded Miss Barker, still with head averted.

"What about him?'" echoed Billy sepulchrally cynical. "*You* ought to know," he added with immense point.

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Then what are you blushing for?"

"I'm not blushing!" she denied.

"Yes, you are! You're like a beetroot. Nose and all."

"I'm not!" she cried, wheeling on him. "And, if I am, it's nothing to do with you! Nothing that I do has anything to do with you in future!" she went on swiftly. "Surely I can go out where I like, and when I like, and with anyone I—I want to? It's nothing whatever to do with you! You mind your own business, and I'll mind mine! I've had quite enough of you to last me a long time, and the less I see of you in future the better I shall like it!"

The tornado had passed, leaving Peggy rather breathless, but with the air of one who has satisfactorily performed an unpleasant duty. Billy, positively gasping with dismay, fumbled first with his tie, and then with the crested school-cap, and finally fell to stroking dazedly his maligned eyebrows.

"But—but—but you're my girl!" he protested in high, squeaking notes. "You—you've been my girl for weeks—and—and——"

"Well, I'm not your girl now," she returned curtly. "You're free! So am I, thank goodness! I don't want to be anyone's girl!"

"Except Clarrie Alston's," he grunted, recovering composure.

"I shall not argue the question," she said with an insufferably grown-up air.

"Because you can't!"

"Silly kid!" was Miss Barker's somewhat lame rejoinder.

Again Master Preece made the gesture which should call the high heavens to witness the hardness of his treatment.

"Been my girl for weeks," he declared pathetically to the world in general. "Meets me special this morning to break it off, and ends up by calling me a 'silly kid'! After that," he concluded with profound dignity, "there's nothing left but for me to say good-bye, Miss Barker."

"Good-bye!" she replied, with a certain relieved readiness.

"Good-bye! Sorry to have troubled you!" he declared, loftily bitter.

"Oh, don't mention it! Good-bye!"

But Billy still lingered, reluctant to depart, and she prepared to administer the *coup-de-grâce*.

"Oh, and I should ask a hairdresser about your eyebrows, if I were you," she told him brightly. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Miss—Miss"—he struggled with his emotions—"Miss *Blooming* Barker!"

He pulled his cap well down over his eyes to obtain a fitting air of truculent melancholy, accorded her a parting glance of utter disdain, and swung round on his heel.

"I've got *that* over all right, thank goodness!" audibly exclaimed Miss Peggy, and set off in the opposite direction.

Billy, stalking morosely home to his lunch, came gradually to the conclusion that his philosophy of life was now entirely controlled by a vast hatred of mankind in general, and Clarence Alston in particular. Coming to closer detail of introspection, he found that his misanthropy made a few exceptions in favour of three of his school chums, two popular actors, the entire cricket team which represented his county, and all his relations (save Aunt Joan, of course). In his darkling mood, he decided that the rest of mankind might go hang, that girls constituted a shallow, giggling fraud on the community, and that Clarence Alston was exactly the kind of chap who richly deserves whatever untoward fate may befall him.

Fewer than four weeks ago, Clarence had been a schoolboy, even as Billy was now. Though a year older than that gentleman, he had been comparatively insignificant, having little of skill at football or cricket or the minor crafts and mysteries of school life. Mainly he was associated with the memories of singularly crumpled collars, hair that was rebelliously wispish, and a pathetic facility for being discovered with inky fingers.

But now Clarence was a person of consideration, and, indeed, shaping well towards becoming a personality. He had forsaken school for commerce in the City, complacently accepting a post which his former intimates declared to be office boy, but which he hinted

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at, in a veiled way, as being a position of grave responsibility and extreme confidence.

The subtle alchemy of daily journeys to the City speedily transmuted Clarence's commonplace being into something finer. He blossomed out experimentally, and, despite envious ridicule from his quondam associates, blossomed out still further. Figuratively, Clarence ranged himself among the largest filberts.

That hair, which aforetime had been insurrectionary, was now urgently flattened and smoothed, lying back from his forehead in glistening sleekness. The crumpled Eton collar was supplanted by a tall linen garotte. Heavily brogued shoes spread on his feet; his socks, on a bright day, were purblinding; for some unexplained reason he sported the colours of His Majesty's Guards in his necktie.

Nor was he ashamed of the mercantile aspect of his life, for his waistcoat pockets were stuck as full of pencils and fountain-pens as a pirate's belt is stuck with pistols and dirks. A thick key-chain depending into his pocket pointed to weighty trust; a slim, tightly-strapped notebook suggested multitudinous business appointments and duties.

And with this transformation of appearance there had also come a change in manners and mannerisms. Clarence, once shy, was now cynically bold and boldly cynical. He spoke with a superior drawl, and his smile was one of those which slowly uncurl themselves.

On the whole, the total effect of Clarence was distinctly good value for only four weeks of effort.

"And yet," determined Billy Preece, going lunchwards and musing over these things, "he's an awful ass!"

The reflection, even though it were repeated continually—once aloud, to the manifest astonishment of a dear old lady with a net bag—brought little consolation with it, and Billy passed on indoors to eat cold mutton with a sort of savage intensity.

One bright spot only could he find in all the grey twilight of his mental horizon. He had said nothing to Peggy Barker about the five shillings which had come his way as a tip from a wealth-exuding uncle on the previous night. Billy had purposed something in the nature of a gala that afternoon for Peggy and himself, but the fates had willed otherwise.

"Lucky I kept my mouth shut about it," he told himself over and over again. "Otherwise she'd have stuck to me till I'd spent it and *then* given me the chuck. As it is, I'll be able to spend it all on myself."

Dinner over, he sauntered in the garden, maturing his plans for the afternoon. Somehow no programme appealed to him as entirely satisfactory; he knew the reason for this, but stoutly declined to admit it to himself. And at last he went out indecisively into the street.

Force of habit, and another motive which he refused to recognise, led his footsteps to the corner of the road wherein dwelt Miss Barker. And there patrolling patiently in front of that scarlet pillar-box which he had always imagined as sacred to his own love affair, was the absurd, futile Clarence!

The instinct for immediate combat was on Billy, but he subjected it to the need for appearing entirely careless and heartwhole.

"Hullo!" he said, inadequately.

"Hullo, youngster!" drawled the ineffable Clarence.

Billy rallied his wits.

"How's your nose?" he asked, in allusion to a far-off episode when he had sorely smitten that organ.

"Quite well, thanks," returned Clarence. "How's yours?"

"Mine's all right," affirmed Billy, slightly mystified.

Clarence cocked his sleek head and smiled lazily.

"Thought it had been put out of joint," he said.

"Out of joint?" echoed Billy, still puzzled, and then enlightenment came to him with a rush. "Meaning Peggy Barker?" he demanded. He hesitated, and then lied courageously. "You've got it wrong. Why, I gave *her* the chuck this morning!"

Clarence went on smiling as though he had forgotten to stop.

"If I had a face like yours—!" burst out Billy, fiercely and entirely irrelevantly. "Crikey! What she can see in you—!"

Again he was minded to instant onslaught on the immaculate Clarence, and again he schooled himself to an attitude of detachment.

"Peggy's not a bad sort," he observed tolerantly. "Bit too kiddish for me, though. And I—I got sick of her laugh. Always giggling. That's mainly why I gave her the chuck. I expect," he added artfully, "I expect she's so cut up that she'll take up with any silly ass now, just to make out she doesn't care."

Peggy herself came daintily through a gate, and advanced towards them. Billy made an

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automatic movement towards flight, and then, despite himself, stood his ground.

"'Afternoon, Mr. Alston," said Peggy, and demurely shook hands with him. She hesitated a moment, and then appeared to discover the existence of Billy Preece. "Hullo, Billy!" she remarked, her voice being an admirable blend of patronage and discouragement.

There was a perceptible hang in the situation.

"Billy was just saying——" began Clarence.

"Oh, shut up, Face!" rudely interrupted Billy, and swung off. "Go and brush your hair!" he called over his shoulder, as a Parthian shaft.

He went down a side street, and, concealed from their view, resolved to spend the afternoon in shadowing them. It seemed to him, for no very obvious reasons, that it would be a satisfying and vengeful thing to do.

Peggy herself . . . . . advanced towards them. Billy made an automatic movement towards flight, and then, despite himself, stood his ground.

With admirable scoutcraft, therefore, he flitted back unperceived, and followed them as they went gaily through the thoroughfares. Arrived at the public park, they gave themselves over to watching the tangled, interlaced cricket in vogue on the closely neighbouring pitches.

"And, all the time, if she'd only known!" murmured Billy, jingling his five shillings in his pocket.

It was soon after four that they left the park, and the amateur detective tracked them stealthily to the entrance of an elaborate tea-shop. He allowed them to settle themselves at a table, and then he swaggered in and took a place close, but not too close, to them. His air of being quite unconscious of their proximity was singularly overdone.

The possession of wealth enabled him to regale himself with a satisfactory meal of sticky, creamy cakes. Also, he had the hardihood to bespeak a sixpenny illustrated journal, and lounged picturesquely back in his seat with it when he had finished. He could not help congratulating himself on the excellent way he was carrying it all off.

Over the top of his journal he furtively watched Peggy and the fatuous Clarence. Peggy was clearly in splendid appetite, and dealt decisively with a sequence of elaborate tuppenny cakes. It was at her third or fourth that Clarence began to regard her with much the same expression as a cautious man regards the tuppences mounting up in a taxi.

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At last, to Clarence's open relief, she delicately dusted her lips with her paper napkin, and announced that she could not eat another mouthful, even if she were paid for doing so.

Billy was aware of, rather than saw, them leaving the shop, for he still preserved his attitude of ignoring their presence. But no sooner had the door swung-to behind them than he straggled from his seat, paid his reckoning, and resumed his surveillance

Peggy and her escort halted outside a big building which had once been a music-hall, but was now a picture palace. Peggy studied the posters and proclaimed her interest in them with a certain insistence, pointing with an eager finger to details in letterpress and illustration. Clarence gave her but divided attention, for he appeared to be engaged in a furtive and rather alarmed attempt to count his money.

As one accustomed to these crises, Billy deduced easily enough that the girl's protracted triflings with the dish of confectionery had wrought unprovided-for havoc on the finances of Clarence.

"Serves you right," sagely commented Billy. "You can't be a nut and have money to spend as well."

However, the upshot was that the pair entered the picture theatre, and two metal discs were clicked out to them at the pay-box. Billy, darting stealthily across the road, was just in time to hear an attendant, taking the discs from them, shout to some invisible mate: "Two thripp'nces!"

Billy eyed the posters tentatively, with some idea of securing a seat behind the pair and indulging in frequent and sarcastic comment. The prices of admission, hanging in a frame notice before the pay-box, presented him with an even more alluring idea.

Seats were threepence, sixpence, and one shilling each, stated the notice. Also, private boxes were to be obtained for five shillings. And also, seats in these private boxes could be had at two shillings apiece.

Almost at once Billy made up his mind to a two-shilling seat in a private box. The hour was that at which picture theatre audiences run to their slenderest, and it was extremely probable that his two-shilling seat would mean that he had a box to himself. And they would look up and see him.

Wherefore, three minutes later, Billy was installed in a faded, tarnished, and slightly mouldy little compartment, which was none the less private box for these reasons. As he had surmised, he was the sole occupant, and, since the darkness as yet rendered him unseen, he practised the assumption of a pose of studied elegance and comfort.

The lights went up unexpectedly before he felt quite settled, and his abrupt prominence made him withdraw shyly to the back of the box. But, during the next picture, he concentrated his attention on getting himself just right, and the following intermission of light found him with arms folded on the ledge and surveying the spectators with a very creditable expression of bored interest.

Peggy saw him. That was evident by the feverish series of nudges she administered to Clarence. There were whisperings between the pair and furtive up-glances from the corners of their eyes, and, presently, open stares of frank amazement.

But Billy, after once acknowledging their interest by a nod of enormous patronage, dropped them out of his world. He never even looked towards them again, but observed the strict line of demarcation which should rule between gentlemen of the private boxes and people of the cheapest seats.

He felt that all this was very comforting and assuaging to one's lacerated feelings, and devoted himself with the utmost satisfaction to watching the pictures as they flickered across the screen. And, after awhile, the ludicrous disasters attendant on a foreign gentleman's effort to introduce a pig into his domestic circle caused Billy to lash out with his legs in a paroxysm of mirth.

His foot encountered something softish which slid across the floor of the box. Billy, striking a match, picked up a miniature portmanteau of the species which ladies carry from their wrists.

He opened it during the next interval, to find it contained a handkerchief, a powder-puff, three hairpins, some 'bus tickets, a newspaper cutting about a novel form of hair-dressing, a tiny purse, and two letters, each addressed to the same person—Miss Constance Malloring.

Billy was at an age when romance is ready to well up at the least bidding. It at once jumped to his mind that this Miss Malloring was youthful, beautiful, and, indeed, a glorified edition of Miss Peggy Barker.

"I'll take it back to her," he said, building high hopes. "You never know your luck!"

So that he did not wait to see the full round of the programme, but left almost at once. He was desirous of seeing Miss Constance Malloring at the earliest opportunity, and wove hazy, golden dreams of her

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gratitude to him for this service he was doing her. Incidentally, it struck him that leaving a box before the show was over was an action which could not fail to have its effect on his two observers in the threepenny seats.

He went direct to the address on the letters, carrying the retrieved handbag concealed beneath his coat. Arrived at Miss Malloring's imposing front door, he demanded immediate speech with her.

"She—she won't know the name," he informed the maid, in answer to her question. "And it's—it's rather private business."

He was shown into a little morning-room, and, a minute later, Miss Constance Malloring came tripping in. Her first appearance caused him a little shock of dismay, for she was so much older than he had anticipated. She was, indeed, relatively quite old, being no less than one-and-twenty.

But she was beautiful—beautiful in a pink-and-white, imperious way which seemed to make Peggy all scrabbly and painfully sunburnt in his memory of her.

"You wished to see me?" asked Miss Malloring.

Shyness held him. He could not speak before so fair a vision. He could only produce the bag from under his coat and hold it out to her in the manner of a modest conjurer.

"Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed. "I've been wondering where I could have left it. I only missed it after I got home."

"I—I took a box," huskily began Billy—"at the picture theatre in——"

"Of course; I remember now. We were there this afternoon. You must have gone in soon after we came out. I'm awfully obliged."

Peggy studied the posters and proclaimed her interest in them with a certain insistence . . . Clarence gave her but divided attention, for he appeared to be engaged in a furtive and rather alarmed attempt to count his money.

"That's all right," said Billy, regaining composure slowly.

She glanced at him and began to open the little purse.

"No, thanks!" exclaimed Billy.

He was cursing his luck. Had she been older and plainer, he would have taken her money without any qualms.

"Not to buy some—some"—she had the tact to suppress "chocolates," and substituted "cigarettes?"

"No, thanks," repeated Billy.

"It was awfully good of you to bring it straight here. I hope you didn't miss any of the pictures?"

"Only a few," said Billy.

It gave them a subject on which to bolster

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Shyness held him. He could not speak before so fair a vision. He could only produce the bag from under his coat and hold it out to her in the manner of a modest conjuror.

up the talk, which had so far lacked sprightliness.

They discussed animated photography in its varied branches, compared judgments on one or two pictures they had seen, and went on to speak of other forms of entertainment.

"And that reminds me," said Miss Malloring, "are you going to the concert at the public hall to-night?"

"No fear!" replied Billy very definitely.

"I'm singing," she explained.

"Can't afford concerts," he said, making a belated effort to reinstate himself.

"Let me give you a couple of seats," she urged. "I've got two left here for the very front row."

"That's five bob the two," protested Billy, eyeing the tickets she had pressed on him.

"Oh, we're not paying for them," she explained. "They're really given us to give away, just to get a good audience. People won't come to concerts this weather," she finished regretfully.

"Thanks, I'd like to come," said Billy, pocketing the tickets. "Only because *you're* singing, though," was his candid reason.

She flushed prettily at the compliment.

"Well, then, I shall look out for you this evening," she promised. "And thanks again for that bag. But I do wish you'd let me——"

She fumbled again with the purse.

Inspiration dazzled Billy for a moment.

"No," he said, "but I—I wonder—I mean——"

"Yes?"

"I should like one of your photographs," he blurted out.

The unexpectedness of the request clearly disconcerted her, but the flush deepened.

"You little flatterer!" she cried gaily, and even sportively tweaked Billy's ear. "Still, I believe I've got one somewhere."

She left him alone while she went off in search, returning presently with a cabinet-size photograph of her ravishing profile.

"I don't know what Kenneth'll say!" she laughed. "Kenneth is my *fiancé*," she explained. "I was with him at the pictures this afternoon."

"I expect that's how you forgot your bag," ventured Billy, feeling wonderfully bright and dashing.

She tucked the photograph into its envelope for him, and he took his departure.

He realised it was too late now to intercept Peggy and the absurd Clarence as they came out of the picture palace, but he knew it would be no difficult matter to discover them somewhere about the neighbourhood.

He kept his eyes open, and presently he saw the pair. They were strolling along listlessly, about two feet apart, and on Clarence's face was the expression of one who is quite at a loss as to how to proceed. The overthrow of his budget had made the subsequent entertainment of Miss Barker no easy matter.

Billy halted before them and surveyed them with a smile of broad affability.

"You never told me you were going to have a box this afternoon!" exclaimed Peggy indignantly.

"Don't see what difference it would have

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made if I had," he retorted. "Anyhow, it was jolly comfortable. Heaps better than being squashed up in those stuffy old threepenny seats."

"Why didn't you stop to the end?" she wanted to know. "You came in after us."

"I had an appointment," he answered airily—"with a girl."

"A girl?" echoed Peggy, perceptibly stiffening.

"Yes, Miss Constance—*Connie* Mallory, ing," he said. "Do you know her?"

"Some silly kid he's picked up," derided Clarence.

"I've got her photo here," remarked Billy, and produced it for inspection.

Ready-made comment died away on Peggy's lips as she scrutinised the picture.

"Um—she's not bad-looking," she said, grudgingly according the highest praise to which she could key herself at the moment. "How did you get to know her?"

"If he *does* know her," was Clarence's unkind parenthesis.

"Oh, I've got to know her all right."

"Yes, but how?" sharply queried Peggy.

"Ah, that would be telling!" retorted Billy, with an aggravating leer. "Little girls shouldn't ask questions."

"I don't believe you *do* know her!" stormed Peggy.

"You can easily see for yourself. She's singing at a concert to-night, and she'll recognise me there all right, don't you fear. Why don't you come and see?"

"That would be worth while, wouldn't it?" scoffed Clarence.

"Well, I've—I've taken a couple of seats in the very front row," said Billy. "If you like to come with me, Peggy——"

"I'm not a schoolboy, to go spying on people!" she snapped, turning away.

"These are half-crown seats," he continued calmly—"in the very front row. Bit different to mouldy old threepenny seats, eh? And it's a slap up concert. No end of fine singers and things." A note of earnestness crept into his voice. "And—and it may run to a bob box of chocolates. Will you come, Peggy?"

"I—I'd like to see if she's really as beautiful as her photograph makes out."

"Then that's settled," he cried, with relief.

"I'm only coming just as an ordinary friend of yours, mind!" she stipulated.

"What else should you think, then?" he countered neatly. "I say, Clarence," he mocked, "why don't you come with us? The seats are only half-a-crown each."

"I—I've got some—some business to look after," said Clarence. "Good-night, Peggy."

He permitted himself a pitying smile at Billy, and departed in good order.

The concert, although the audience was somewhat lean, proved quite successful. Miss Malloring smiled at Billy in the friendliest manner from the door of the artistes' room as he came in with Peggy.

"She's awfully good-looking, Billy," said Peggy, as they took their homeward way.

"I suppose she's engaged? That tall, fair fellow——"

"Now would I be after her if she was engaged?"

"It—it seems so funny, though. Let me have another look at her photo, Billy?"

Billy handed it to her.

"I hate her!" she announced, handing back the photograph. "Billy, tear that up," she commanded.

"But—but you've done with me," protested Billy. "You said so yourself!"

"Tear it up, and we'll see!"

"All right," agreed Billy, and rent the photograph across and across.

"You're a dear, Billy!" murmured Peggy.

"Very well, you can be my girl again," said Billy handsomely. "Just for a bit, anyhow. Remember, you're not the only——"

"I won't forget, Billy," promised Peggy submissively.

Billy winked jovially at the man in the moon. Then he slid his arm through Peggy's, and observed contentedly:

"Exit Clarence!"

Ready-made comment died away on Peggy's lips as she scrutinised the picture. "Um—she's not bad-looking," she said.

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Hurrah *for the* Holidays!

Illustrated from Kodak Photographs.

"We're the Kings of the Castle."

A Sea-Horse.

This interested pair evidently did not know that a camera was so near.

Are these pretty little damsels off for a sail or merely posing for their photographs?

Everybody in these seaside photographs seems to be having a thoroughly good time, whether in the sea or on the beach. All boys and girls love digging and building castles and forts, and the parents of the youngsters in these pictures have chosen delightfully sandy spots for their holidays.

The little boy with the trolley-car is probably going to have a ride for a change, and one can imagine the joy of rushing up and down the parade on such a fascinating toy.

The couple on the bathing machine make a

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Waiting for the water to wash the tort away.

Fun on the beach.

Off for a ride.

Bathing from a tent on the beach adds greatly to the fun of a holiday, although the small boy does not seem to think so.

very charming picture, and it is fortunate that their attention was occupied long enough for the snap-shot to be taken.

As a rule, holidays are forgotten as soon as one returns to town, but with the help of a camera very pleasant remembrances of a jolly time can be obtained. Usually people in amateur photographs wear a very fixed ***expression. In these pictures, however, the photographer seems to have selected just the right moment to "snap," and the result is certainly very satisfactory.***

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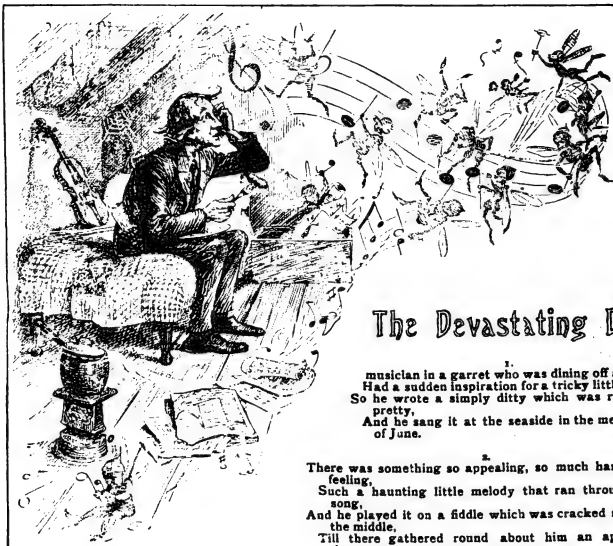

The Devastating Ditty.

1.

A musician in a garret who was dining off a carrot,
Had a sudden inspiration for a tricky little tune!
So he wrote a simply ditty which was really very pretty,
And he sang it at the seaside in the merry month of June.

2.

There was something so appealing, so much harmony and feeling,
Such a haunting little melody that ran throughout the song,
And he played it on a fiddle which was cracked right down the middle,
Till there gathered round about him an appreciative throng.

3.

Then there came a canny person of the name of James Macpherson,
He saw profit in the prospect, touched the minstrel, proffered gold,
Says he: "Yo're looking needy, for your clothes and boots are seedy,
Take this money, my good mannie, and consider your song sold."

4.

Our fiddler, quite contented, to this bargain soon consented,
But he afterwards repented, for that tune became the rage;
All the pierrots sang and tummed it, all the organs blared and strummed it,
And everybody hummed it, both the simple and the sage.

5.

It soothed the savage Zulu when he listened to his Lulu,
As she sang the song in treble to her wild and woolly mate,
And many a gentle maiden, learning Czerny, Bach, and Haydn,
Plucked the air upon the zither when her father came home late.

6.

Now lightly touched *legato*, now here and there *staccato*,
With certain notes *marcato* it was heard in every home;
It was softly sung *andante* by grandmamma and auntie,
While even tiny children tried to buzz it through a comb.

7.

So magnetic was the music that it took the place of physic,
All the doctors, nurses, patients, sang its praises to the sky!
It was ordered for bronchitis, housemaid's knee, corns, gout, neuritis,
And it cured the pale anæmic and gave lustre to his eye.

8.

So joy and mild sensations spread abroad among the nations,
All through the little melody the minstrel sang in June;
Peace reigned, and with emotion hands were stretched across the ocean,
And a statue was erected to the maker of that tune.

Frank Pember.

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THE SEA MONSTER

"Oh, was it weed, or fish, or floating hair?"

By Jessie Pope.

You could always tell the Greylingsea Swimming Club men, even in winter, when straw hats and club colours were out of season. They were a brown-faced, hard-looking lot, most of them big, and some of them bulky, for swimming, like singing, seems to lend itself to adipose tissue. But each of them had a cheery eye and a good-humoured smile, for there's nothing like constant immersion in the briny to wash away the blues, and nothing like a plunge from the pier in all weathers, even when the iron steps to the grey heaving breakers are coated with ice, to make a man hard as nails and fit as a fiddle—when he's used to it.

The members of the G. S. C. *were* used to it. They were the hardest, smartest crowd on the East Coast, as club records showed; their water polo matches blackened the pier and the sea front with spectators every Saturday in the season, and their fellow townspeople were justly proud of them. If there was a dissentient voice in the general note of adulation, it was raised by Nancy Foxall, the most enterprising girl in the seaside town, and even Nancy always added that it was their selfishness rather than their swimming that inspired her antagonism.

"It isn't fair!" she exclaimed peevishly to her girl friends—"that they should keep such a ripping bathing stage at the pier-head all to themselves. That notice 'Swimming Club Members Only' always makes my blood boil. Besides, it's so antiquated! They have mixed bathing at all the South Coast piers, and turn out some splendid women swimmers in consequence. And the worst of it is none of you girls will co-operate."

"Well, what are we to do?" replied one of her chums. "Take the bathing stage by storm, annex the boxes, and bathe from the pier ourselves? We should probably only drown if we did."

"No, but we might write a letter to the *Mercury*, or petition the pier authorities," retorted Nancy, "or anyhow refuse to marry any of the swimming club men, until they agree to open the club to women members."

"Very well, then," laughed another, "you can refuse to marry Duncan Macpherson for a start." Nancy blushed. "I would with pleasure," she said vehemently, "if it would help the cause. But he hasn't given me the first refusal yet—and if he did, you girls would go back on me. You'd go on bobbing about in the shallow water in front of the machines quite happily, your only ambition in life not to get your hair wet."

The others laughed and voted poor old Nancy quite mad, and continued bathing from the machines in picturesque costumes and contentment, for it was quite true the Greylingsea girls studied appearance more than sport, and voted rubber caps too unbecoming for words. So Nancy shrugged her slim shoulders and snorted contemptuously, and went for a couple of sunshiny summer months to the South Coast, whence she posted enthusiastic accounts of her progress as a pier-head performer. Nothing, in fact, but a characteristic anxiety to display her new accomplishments to the natives, and a secret craving to see Duncan Macpherson again, would have brought her back before the end of the summer. As it was she arrived home on September 6th, and her return could not have been better timed, for, as the posters in the station yard showed, the Annual Swimming Club gala was fixed for the following day.

In spite of her grudge against the exclusiveness of the club, Nancy was particularly popular with the members, and lost no time in getting down to the pier, where the workmen were strengthening the high diving stage. Several of the swimming men were there, discussing final arrangements, including Dr.

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Marsh the Club secretary, a trifle too portly for racing but a useful man in the water, and Reggie Shepperton the Club Captain and long-distance man, whose round genial face was much more benevolent than his tackling at water polo. They had all had their last practice and greeted the appearance of the pretty girl, in her white linen tub frock, with enthusiasm.

"Hullo, Nancy," called the doctor. "Just back in time—twenty-four hours later and you'd have missed the show. You're looking blithe and bonny."

"I'm feeling it," laughed Nancy, "had a perfectly ripping time—picnics, tennis tournaments, and bathing twice a day from the end of the pier into the bargain." As a rule Nancy's voice was rather soft and caressing, but now she raised it two or three notes, in order that it might carry to the bathing stage built out from the pier-head—where her blue eyes had discovered a pair of shirt-sleeved arms vigorously rubbing a sandy-haired poll with a big bath towel. It was Duncan Macpherson—last out of the water as usual—and if Nancy's heart throbbed at the sight of that red head, Duncan's pulses also began drumming furiously at the sound of the voice he had been pining to hear for two long months.

Picture postcards were all that had bridged the distance between them, but now both were seized with a sudden unaccountable shyness, and when Duncan strode up the gang plank from the bathing stage to the pier-head the girl's back was turned, and she was engaged in such animated conversation with his colleague that Duncan became absorbed in the progress of the workmen in self-defence, until Dr. Marsh, with a sly wink at the others, called out: "Here, Duncan, you ruffian, don't you see there's a lady present?" The shy Scotsman turned towards the group.

"And how are you keeping, Miss Foxall?" he said, his attractive, freckled face a trifle paler than usual.

"How d'you do," replied Nancy airily, though a little blush crept up under her tan as her gay blue eyes met his grave hazel ones. "How high is the diving board now with the extra bit on?"

"It will be a twenty-five-foot drop—at half tide," he said.

"Pooh—that's nothing," she exclaimed. "I've been doing twenty-five twice a day, and doing it for pleasure, not swank, so there!"

"If that's the case," said Reggie Shepperton, "why don't you enter for the competition to-morrow and trot off with the shield?"

"Wouldn't I just love to!" cried Nancy, her face radiant at the blissful prospect, "but of course you don't mean it! You selfish creatures are going to keep all the fun and the *kudos* to yourselves, as usual."

"Oh no we're not; the diving is an open event, no restriction to size or sex."

Nancy meditated a moment.

"Have any other girls entered?" she said.

"No—but that needn't frighten you——"

"Oh, it wouldn't," she replied quickly; in fact, it made the idea more attractive. "In any case," she added, "it might be a good object lesson to Greylingsea, and show the authorities that if girls can dive from the top of the pier they can bathe from the pier also."

The doctor laughed. "There's no telling," he said; "anyhow, Nancy, you enter for the dive, and it may be the thin end of the wedge."

Nancy's blue eyes sparkled, for in a rainbow vision she saw the upturned faces of an admiring, awestruck multitude—people she knew, people who would point her out ever after as the plucky girl who dived from the top of the pier. In imagination she heard the roar of applause from a thousand throats as she cut a clean swallow flight in the air. The prospect was alluring. Then she glanced at the diving board; it was a very long way from the water—she was conscious of a small internal shiver. "How long will you give me to make up my mind?" she said.

"It's a case of 'do it now,'" replied the doctor, "the entry closes this afternoon. Look here, would you like to come down on the bathing-stage and see the pots? I've got them locked up in my box—the sight of the shield may help your decision."

"Oh, I can imagine its beauties," she said, "I'll think it over and let you know in five minutes." Then, as a newcomer turned official attention to business matters, Nancy crossed the pier, where Duncan, whose face had shown instant antagonism to the scheme, had rather sulkily rejoined the workmen during its discussion.

"Mr. Macpherson," she called softly. Duncan came and stood by her as she leant against the rail.

"They want me to enter for the diving competition to-morrow," she said, looking up at him sideways.

"So I hear," he replied, dogged disapproval in every line of his face.

"What do you advise?"

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"I'm all against it," said Duncan shortly. The thought of Nancy's appearance in swimming-costume before a crowd jarred every fibre of his Scottish temperament.

"But why?"

"The dive is too high for a lady," he replied with caution.

"Rubbish! I've often heard you say if anyone can dive ten feet properly they can dive twenty, and if they can dive twenty they can dive thirty."

"Well, don't ye do it," he repeated. "Ye haven't the necessairy experience."

"But I have! I've been diving a lot, and I'm told I go in quite all right."

"Even so, I'm all against it."

"But — why — *why* don't you want me to do it?"

"Ye'll have me tell ye the reason?" he said, his eyes suddenly meeting hers.

"Yes," she replied.

"Because I love ye."

Nancy had been waiting for it for months. Now it had come, and her heart gave a great throb of joy. He was hers, and, woman-like, she played with her conquest, and, turning away, looked down again at the water.

"And won't you go on loving me if I do the dive?" she said, with a whimsical little laugh, and, at the sound of that laugh, Duncan's freckled face flushed darkly. He had opened a locked away corner in his deep Scotch heart for her inspection, and she was merely amused—she was laughing at him for his pains.

"Mr. Macpherson," she called softly. Duncan came and stood by her. . . . "They want me to enter for the diving competition to-morrow."

"That's a question I'll no like to answer," he said coldly. "Ye'll do the dive or not, Miss Foxall, as you feel disposed, and I'll be minding my own business for the future." And he walked back to the workmen.

Nancy laughed again and shrugged her shoulders.

"Put my name down, Mr. Secretary," she called out. "I've made up my mind."

"Bravo Nance!" said the doctor. "I've always said you're the prettiest girl in

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Greylingsea, and now it's evident you're the pluckiest, and this time to-morrow we shall see you carrying off the trophy."

"I'll have a shot at it anyhow," she replied. "What time does the diving come off?"

"3.30 sharp, and we shan't wait for late comers, because we've a big programme to get through. Here, take one of the bills and study it."

Nancy walked down the pier looking at the programme. The diving competition included plunging, and diving from the spring-board, and she felt equal to the test in both. There were swimming races and a boys' water-polo match, while the entertainment concluded with a comic water act, described in the bill as "the scream of the season," and performed by members of the Greylingsea Swimming Club. But though Nancy's blue eyes took note of the various items, her thoughts were busy with other matters, and as she crushed the paper into a hard ball and tossed it over the side she ejaculated:

"How touchy these silly old Scotch people are!" Still, he loved her, so nothing else mattered—except her high dive. She *must* manage that all right; it would be a calamity to go in flat—not that she doubted her ability to impress the natives. She pictured their astonishment when they recognised the only lady competitor—and the envy of the other girls, and their determination to follow in her footsteps.

"We shall get our own way in the end," she said gleefully to herself, "and I shall be the pioneer of ladies' swimming in Greylingsea, and when they are bobbing like ducks round the end of the pier, instead of wallowing in the shallows in front of the machines, they will remember that Nancy Foxall's high dive brought them their freedom and their joy."

And her heart leapt at the prospect of present adulation and future gratitude.

As to Duncan—she thrust the sensitive Caledonian at the back of her mind, for personal matters must never, she decided, interfere with great public endeavour, "and if," she added to herself, "he doesn't applaud with the rest he's not worth worrying about."

Still this benefactor to her sex was careful not to mention her project at home, for fear of maternal opposition, and was secretly relieved to hear that Mrs. Foxall had an engagement the following day which would prevent her being present at the pier entertainment. There was so much to be told about her visit to the South, and so much to hear about home-doings that it was late before mother and daughter parted for the night, and even when she had crept into bed Nancy was far too excited to sleep.

But she was tired, and now all sorts of uneasy visions of that prospective high dive filled her mind. Suppose she slipped as she sprang off, and went in all arms and legs like a frog; suppose she turned over too soon and went in perpendicularly; suppose she didn't turn over soon enough and went in as flat as a pancake. She could almost hear the apprehensive "Oh's!" of the crowd, and the sorrowful silence that greeted her shame-faced reappearance on the surface. A good dive would crown her with glory—a bad one would mark her as a subject for sympathy, if not derision, henceforth and for evermore.

She tossed from side to side. Sleep had forsaken her, the night was sultry, and the big round moon, which illuminated the room and her little white bed, seemed to make her wider awake than ever. If only she could have had just one little practice before the competition; the great thing was to know your board—and here again the men had the advantage, of course. It was not fair! Half-a-dozen dives off that top board and the same number from the spring-board would make all the difference in the world. Just like that selfish swimming club to have an open competition and keep all the facilities for practice to themselves.

Nancy sat up in bed, irritable, nervous, all her self-confidence slipping from her.

"If only I could have half-an-hour in that bathing stage by myself!" she groaned peevishly. "Oh, how hot it is—what wouldn't I give for a plunge now!"

As she sat up in bed she could see the silver moonlight track across the sea, and, as she looked, an idea flashed across her mind with the suddenness of an inspiration. Why not slip down to the pier-head now and have a practice; it was half-tide—it would be half-tide to-morrow afternoon. The conditions were perfect. There was no one to see, no one to know—her pulses throbbed with excitement at the prospect. She would tell them after and it would increase her reputation for pluck tenfold. The chance was too glorious to be missed. She jumped up, slipped on her swimming dress, her beach bathing sandals, and a big coat, stole silently downstairs and out through the French window of the library into the moonlight.

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The parade was deserted except for two prowling cats, and they sped for cover in the bushes round the wind shelter as the slender, speeding figure hurried by towards the pier. The turnstiles were locked, but Nancy climbed them easily, and, with her spirits rising higher every moment with the delightful thrill of adventure, she hastened silently up the pier. The air was still and sultry, but there was a brisk current above, and a drift of ragged clouds was climbing the sky to windward.

The familiar objects on the pier looked curiously indistinct and nebulous in the grey moonlight, and Nancy negotiated the locked gate to the gang plank cautiously, and, with a mocking laugh at the notice, "Club Members Only," she stood exulting on the forbidden bathing stage at last. The row of white bathing boxes looked ghostly in the moonlight; the high diving board loomed murkily above her, but she decided to practise other items of the competition first, and made her way carefully down the iron steps to the lowest stage for the plunge into the moonlit water.

At that moment the first ragged cloud threw a trail across the moon—the glimmering track on the ripples was eclipsed, and for the first time the utter isolation and eerieness of the place came over her with a rush. A sombre greyness loomed everywhere; the dark mysterious horizon was grey, the illimitable stretch of heaving water was grey, the landing stage was grey—the very air seemed leaden and opaque.

Curious noises reached her straining ears, gurglings and creakings and slappings among the invisible piles all round and beneath, and, all at once, just overhead there came a rush of thin mysterious plaintive cries that made the slender girl jump almost out of her skin.

"Only night birds," she said, laughing back a shudder, "but I'll wait till the moon comes out again before I go in."

It was while she waited—drawing her blanket coat closer around her, half impatient for the plunge, half wishing she was safe back in bed again, that the moon shone out of an unexpected peephole in the cloud, and revealed a curious undulating movement in the shimmering surface of the water, some twenty yards from the landing-stage. Nancy paused in the act of taking off her coat and stared.

"A porpoise?" she muttered, for at the moment that curious line of cross ripples showed a portion of the object that caused them, "but it's too big for a porpoise," and then the curtain of cloud drew across the moon once more, and left her still in doubt. The next instant a queer bubbling, snorting sound came through the greyness, an inexplicable sound that was quite different from the lapping of the water in the piles. Once again the moon shone forth, the dark object was ten yards nearer, and it was no porpoise!

Nancy clutched at the iron railing, and took a step back, her eyes fixed in startled amazement at the long, grey shape—now submerged, now partially showing above the surface, rolling lazily along towards the steps where she was standing. What in the world was it? Bother the clouds! The moon had gone in again, but only for a moment.

The next, her heart suddenly seemed to leap to her throat, an icy hand of terror gripped her spine, for there, in the pitiless grey moonlight, her wide, horrified eyes saw a huge grey, greenish creature, a flabby, bulky, unearthly shape, clumsily dragging itself out of the water on to the steps beneath her.

Two gleaming, blood-red eyes waved on antennæ, above a loathsome, pulpy semblance of a barnacle encrusted face. With two lizard-like arms, ending in webbed fingers from which long rattling feelers sprouted like crab's claws, it heaved itself up from step to step, and for one interminable moment the girl, petrified with horror, met those waving phosphorescent eyes in a frozen fascinated gaze. Then, with a hoarse, horrible cry—such a cry as she would not have believed could have issued from her lips—she turned and fled.

Blinded with stark panic, stumbling, clutching, staggering, she tripped over the top step, barked both shins badly on the iron edge, but she was up again, up and on, unconscious of physical pain, conscious only of that ghastly rattle, rattle, rattle, flop, flop coming steadily up the steps after her.

The hunted, terror-stricken girl rushed blunderingly across the murky bathing-stage, missed the gang-plank in the darkness, found it, with another hoarse cry, fled along it and hurled herself over the gate at the end. Her coat caught on the wooden placard, "Club Members Only," and brought her headlong the other side, but she wrenched it free and was up again and racing round the pavilion at the pier-head and down the length of the pier. Choking, gasping, she tore along, and ever behind came that pursuing rattle, rattle, rattle of those loathly sprouting webbed feet on wooden planks.

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But the sound grew fainter: by the time the fugitive had reached the turnstiles, all was silence, save the dull plash of the breaking waves on the beach below. With a supreme effort, her breath coming in rough, rasping sobs, Nancy precipitated herself over the last barrier, and once again was on the deserted, lamp-lit parade.

How she got home she never knew. It seemed an eternity before once again she crept in at the French window, and dropped on the library carpet in the blackness of unconsciousness.

The early morning sun was streaming in at the library window and the birds were chirping cheerily when Nancy came to herself. For a few moments, she stared around bewildered—then came the hideous memory of the night, and next the thought: "Mother must never know—it would kill her." Weak, trembling, she crept up the dear old familiar stairs to her bedroom, slipped out of her swimming dress into her nightgown, and burrowing under the bedclothes, sought to shut out the horror that still haunted her throbbing brain.

When Mrs. Foxall found her daughter sleeping heavily at nine o'clock, she left word before going out that Miss Nancy must not be disturbed. "Let her have her sleep out," she said to the maids, "the poor child is done up with her long journey—it will do her good to rest." The orders were obeyed sympathetically, and it was actually late in the afternoon before Nancy woke, and lay drowsily wondering what on earth she could have eaten for dinner to give her such a hideous nightmare.

Then she moved, and found she was stiff and grazed, bruised and sore, and an apprehensive glance revealed the hastily wrenched off swimming costume and the torn coat in the corner of the room. It was no nightmare—that hideous business had actually happened, and at that moment the clock on her mantelpiece struck four.

Nancy pressed a trembling hand to her forehead. Then it was the next afternoon, and the diving would be over—not that she cared. Never, never would she go into that awful sea again. A long shudder went through her—but in its train came another thought, even more horrifying. The gala would be taking place—they would all be in the sea—*he*, Duncan would be at the mercy of that unspeakable thing.

She sprang from her bed. Perhaps it was not too late; she must warn them of their horrible danger. There was yet hope. She crushed her hands to her throbbing head.

"Oh Duncan," she moaned, "if only I can save you in time!"

The pier was black with people, as the white-faced, agitated girl arrived at the turnstiles.

"Make haste, Miss Nancy," said the man inside the pay-box, "you'll be too late."

"What are they doing now?" she ejaculated breathlessly.

"Why, it's the comic show, 'The First Regatta'—and they all be enjoying theirselves a treat—makes me want to come out and have a look at them."

"Is the swimming and the diving all over?"

"Oh lor, yes, miss—long ago——"

"Did anything happen. Has there been any accident?"

"Accident! Not likely, miss—we don't have no accidents here. But hurry along, or you'll be missing all the fun."

With a gasp of relief that she was yet in time, Nancy almost ran up the pier. But as she neared the end her blood ran cold at the sound of hoarse screams from the water below—screams of men in terror, immediately followed by shouts of laughter from the rows of spectators. Worming her way in through the crowd, she found a niche in the front row and looked down shuddering.

Swimming-club members, ludicrously disguised as prehistoric men, were seated in tubs and on logs and rafts—paddling frantically, desperately away from something that rolled and undulated along the surface. What, what, WHAT was that awful object that pursued them? Her heart stopped. She gasped for breath, for the grey grisly shape that tore them from their tubs and dragged them under, was the never-to-be-forgotten horror that had chased her down the moonlit pier in the wee sma' hours.

And yet at each fresh tragedy the people cheered and roared with merriment—and while she watched, aghast and bewildered, the last log was capsized, and the sea monster, its work done, climbing clumsily on a raft, unhooked the grim, seaweed tangled crest with its waving red-eyed antennæ—and disclosed the ginger head, and grinning, good-humoured face of Duncan Macpherson.

"Good old Macpherson," shouted the cheering spectators, and illuminating voices came from the crowd behind her.

"Isn't he a scream!"

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Swimming-club members, ludicrously disguised as prehistoric men, were seated in tubs and on log rafts.

"Yes, and what a make-up! Where did he get it from?"

"London, only came yesterday."

"Beats me how he can swim in it."

"Oh, he was practising last night off the pier—didn't you hear the latest?"

"No——"

"Oh, a great joke—it's all over the town. Duncan was having a dress rehearsal in the water about midnight and he came across some fellow skulking about on the bathing stage—after the pots and cups, locked up in the secretary's box. As soon as the thief set eyes on Duncan he gave tongue, and took his hook like a thousand of bricks with the sea monster at his heels! But you can't make much pace in a tail and flappers, so the chap got away, but I bet he won't go burgling again in a hurry."

If Nancy's face was white when she wormed her way to the side of the pier, it was particularly pink as she slipped back out of the crowd again. Home and oblivion were all she craved—home, oblivion, and tea, for her brain was dizzy and her throat was parched.

It was after she had emptied the cup that cheers, not once but many times, that she lay in the garden hammock, weakly thanking Providence that no one but herself would ever know the identity of the pier burglar. And then the garden gate clicked, and turning languidly she saw Duncan Macpherson, in a cool, not to say captivating, suit of white duck, striding towards her. His face was grave, his eyes were eager and anxious.

"Ye're not looking a bit well," he said in his abrupt way.

Nancy gave a sickly smile.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said.

"But ye never tur-rned up for the competition," he went on. "Tell me, Nancy, did I prevent ye doing the dive, after all?"

Nancy averted her eyes for a moment—then she met his and nodded her head. It was the truth. Duncan looked pleased, but penitent.

"I'm sorry to think that those worrds of mine stopped ye'r pleasure," he said earnestly. "Ye'll be calling me an awful hard man."

Nancy nodded again.

"Will ye ever be forgiving me?" he pleaded.

Her blue eyes suddenly filled with tears—and Duncan dropped on his knees beside her.

"Dinna greet—dinna greet!" he murmured. "Oh, do say ye'll marry me—my little lassie," and without waiting for an answer he drew her aching head on his shoulder and pressed his freckled cheek against her pale one.

"I don't think I *could* marry a sea monster!" sobbed Nancy.

But she did, all the same.

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A BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

An Explanation by the Bolter of Why He Bolted.

By Fox Russell.

"Love laughs at locksmiths," but the exigencies of modern everyday life triumph even over Love, and when Angela and I, after a year's engagement, definitely agreed to marry within a month's time (I was emboldened to plunge into the sea of matrimony by my Aunt Anne's hints that I should inherit her £400 a year), we found househunting—that wearing, exhausting, and expensive pursuit—was absolutely necessary before the fateful knot could be tied.

At first our *modus operandi* was that I should be sent as a sort of advance guard to any likely house indicated by the agents; then, should the property pass the eliminating stage, a second journey, this time shared by Angela, was made. This scheme was carried on merrily for some little time, but at length, disillusioned by the agents' lying representations, and their conversion, by honeyed words, of buildings that looked like cucumber frames into picturesque cottages, we gave it up, and took to answering advertisements in the daily papers.

Tiring of this in turn, we reverted to the agents once more, and this time were given particulars of a house apparently possessing every advantage which could be asked for reasonably, standing in a secluded situation two miles from Togley Heath Railway Station.

"It seems a long way for you to walk every morning to the train, Edward," said Angela. "I don't know how you will manage it in the winter."

But I, in the plentitude of my powers—or "full of beans" as I should have put it, in my own language—made light of the difficulty. Lancelot, fresh from the presence of Guinevere, could not have brushed away a trifling obstacle with more decision than did I, on that bright, sunny morning, as we travelled Togley-wards. Besides, the house we were about to inspect dangled before us an alluring prospect. It was in a healthy neighbourhood with all the attractions of a picturesque country, coupled with good railway facilities for reaching the city, from which it was distant some fifteen miles; above all, it was cheap, and my income was strictly limited.

"Nonsense, my darling," I said warmly, in reply to her doubt. "That two mile walk will be a splendid thing for my health. Just picture to yourself me starting off from 'The Retreat'"—this was the name of the property to be inspected—"at 8.45, swinging a cane and whistling a tune, on my two-mile tramp across the Heath, and sailing into Togley Station in a little over the half-hour, taking my seat in a smoker, feeling braced and invigorated by my walk in the bright sunlight——"

Angela continued the story for me. —"and picture yourself returning across that same two miles of heath, in a fog or a snowstorm, or even in a pelting rain, and wearily dragging your limbs——"

I burst into a hearty laugh.

"If the house suits us the distance from the station will be nothing. The walk backwards and forwards every day will keep me splendidly fit. Here we are at Togley; now for a fly to 'The Retreat.'"

Angela fell in love with the house before we had even entered it, the trim little garden with its wealth of rose trees and rhododendron bushes immediately catching her somewhat romantic imagination. We had brought the key with us and letting ourselves in, proceeded to inspect the house.

I suppose we could hardly be described as experts, and our examination was perhaps too cursory—there was no caretaker to whom we could put questions. Sated with our recent experience of wholly impossible dwelling-places and with the mendacious descriptions of agents—really, Ananias

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seems to have been a very over-rated man —we were disposed to view everything through rose-coloured glasses. To cut a long story short, we were both so taken with the house that we made up our minds on the spot that here was our ideal abode.

Within a week I had agreed to take "The Retreat," and two months later, freshly returned from our honeymoon, we, accompanied by Jane, of whom more anon, entered into our kingdom.

On the very first morning our troubles began. Jane, who was our cook-general, and had been in the service of my wife's family at some long-forgotten period of the world's history, came up to the breakfast-room and presenting a distressed and sorrowful visage, announced the awful fact that there was no water to be had. Determined to make the best of things, I cried cheerily:

"Never mind, Jane! After all, one doesn't want water for breakfast; we'll drink tea."

Angela frowned at me and said rather sharply:

"Don't be so silly, Edward; you can't make tea without water."

This fact had not struck me before. One may overdo even optimism.

Angela and I, personally conducted by Jane, wandered kitchenwards and turned on the taps in the scullery. Our general was quite right; there *was* no water. Here was a pretty state of things. I immediately rose to the occasion and instinctively took command of Jane.

"Out with the kitchen fire. Don't lose a moment," I cried, leading the way out of the scullery, "or the boiler will burst!"

Jane was inclined to be mutinous. She murmured:

"Yes, and s'pose it bustes afore I puts out the fire, wot price me?"

"That risk," I replied sententiously, "is covered by the stamp-licking card now doubtless in your possession."

"Oh, *you* go, Edward," said Angela, "and rake out the fire."

Now I had, very fortunately, invested in a garden rake and a hoe, and I quickly dashed off and got the former, whilst my wife and the cook proceeded upstairs to the bath-room tap. I warily approached the kitchen fire, garden rake in hand. Somehow I didn't quite seem to know how kitchen fires are raked out. How the deuce do you begin?

I brandished the rake, made a snatch at the front bars of the fire, and rather to my embarrassment, the whole of them tumbled out. So did the burning coal and cinders and I nearly succeeded in setting the house on fire. I was not inclined to delay over the process of raking out—the unpleasant fact that the boiler might burst at any moment was sufficient to lend speed to my movements, and having accomplished my task, I joined Angela and Jane in the bathroom.

The taps were still full on but not a drop of water was obtainable. Angela and I had neither of us stinted the water in our baths and the supply had seemed unlimited—yet now it was impossible to drag another drop from the tap. Jane, with her hands folded resignedly in front of her, opined that "P'raps the system was leaking."

A brief inspection of the "system" followed and revealed the fact that there wasn't a teaspoonful of water in it. Then an illuminating idea burst upon my mind; the water required to be pumped up! I remembered for the first time that we were not on the main, but dependent upon wells for the supply. I communicated this discovery to Angela, who sighed and rather helplessly asked what we were to do? And for answer, I slipped off my coat and cried with cheery optimism:

"All hands to the pump! or, to speak more correctly, all my own two hands to the pump; I'll be splendid exercise every morning—it'll be——"

"Rather *pumping*," struck in Angela, beginning to laugh. I ignored the veiled sarcasm and proceeded out into the back yard, seized the pump handle, and muttering to myself: "Now for twenty minutes healthful exercise," commenced my task.

For the first half of the specified time, the sucker wouldn't work; then at last, when the plunger (I think I am right in these terms), began throwing up the water, the labour was increased tenfold, and I began to feel uncomfortably warm. Still I stuck to my task manfully, and kept on working with furious haste, for well over half-an-hour, Angela, from the cistern-room window, delivering bulletins every few minutes, and cheering me on.

Panting and exhausted, I was much discouraged upon hearing that there was not more than an inch of water in the upstairs tank and, relinquishing the pump-handle with a naughty word, I frantically rushed into the house, only to discover that the bath-room tap, not having been turned off after we had tried it unsuccessfully half-an-hour before, my pumping had filled, not the cistern, but the bath!

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As the plug was in the waste, the bath had overflowed and the water was pouring down the stairs like a young Niagara! When I—perspiring and breathless—regarded my blistered hands and generally dishevelled appearance and then turned my gaze upon the flowing stream of water, I wanted to kick myself.

"Angela," I said, somewhat severely, "it was rather stupid, was it not, to leave open the tap and shut down the waste——"

"Yes, dear, it was; how came you to do so?"

That's just it. Whenever I start admonishing or offering sensible advice, Angela always contrives, somehow or other, to put me in the wrong.

Scarcely had we occupied our new house a week when we were alarmed by our faithful Jane who, whilst handing the vegetables at dinner, suddenly dropped the dish and, with a sound somewhere between a squeal and a scream, mingled with the mystic words, "*Ow! Ouch!*" waltzed out of the room incontinently.

I gazed up at the curtains behind where Angela sat, and for a brief moment caught sight of what was either the biggest mouse I ever saw or—a youthful rat. My wife affrightedly demanded what was the matter, and when I told her, somewhat to my astonishment she made the same observation which had fallen from our cook-general, and executed a very similar strategic movement down the room and out of the door.

That evening we decided on having a fox-terrier and a rat-trap.

For a week I wrestled each morning with the pump-handle in a manful endeavour to pump up an adequate supply of water for the day's requirements. At the end of the time, however, I gave it up in despair; the effort was sapping my strength and embittering the happiness of my young life, so I engaged a youth from the village to do the work, and this arrangement proved quite a success, except on the mornings when he forgot to come.

The fox-terrier duly arrived, and signalised the occasion on the first night by killing a young rat in the dining-room and laying its mutilated remains, in triumph, on my pillow.

I felt that it would be ungracious on my part openly to censure Cæsar for doing this, but I did go so far as to disapprove unmistakably.

The afternoons were now drawing in, and the walk home from the station every night was no longer a pleasure, even when it didn't rain, which was seldom. And when it didn't rain, there was always a fog. Twice I walked into the heath pond in the darkness and murk of the November evening, once I tripped over a sleeping donkey and fell, whilst such minor though alarming annoyances as importunate and occasionally threatening beggars kept one alive to the possible dangers of crossing that lonely waste of common.

One morning a happy thought struck me, Cæsar wanted exercise—I would take him with me to the station and leave him in charge of a porter; the dog would be a welcome companion for me on my homeward journey after dark.

I may as well say here, at once, that the experiment was not a success, for it appeared that as soon as the porter hitched the intelligent animal on to a post in the railway station, it let go such a howl as raised half-a-dozen passengers, waiting on the down platform, off their seats, like one man. Cæsar continued his vocal efforts, intermittently varied by *tremolo* and *forte* movements and culminating in a cross between a long-drawn howl and a Comanche war-whoop, throughout the live-long day.

During this time, four young children were treated for hysterics and two old ladies applied for police protection. On bringing me the dog and receiving his tip, the porter convinced me of Cæsar's unpopularity in the immediate neighbourhood and respectfully declined to undertake the charge of him on any future occasion. Then he lightly sketched in the details already touched upon.

Aunt Anne came to stay with us the following week and expressed her pleasure at our choice of a house—which was good. She also intimated that her present stay might be a long one—which was, well, dubious. However, we were out to please her, and the thought of that £400 a year was very alluring; true, Aunt Anne was still in early middle age, a comely widow; she *might* outlive the pair of us—anyhow, we must take no chances.

I started a bicycle, and with it a diary. But bicycling with top hat and umbrella was not exactly calculated to promote comfort, and on rainy mornings I always preferred to walk. Also I found that Angela's parcels, the almost inevitable fish-basket, grocery packages, etc., were easier to carry on foot than awheel.

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The diary appended tells its own tale.

SUNDAY.—Beastly day. Spent morning in bed. Stared out of drawing-room window all afternoon. Never ceased raining

MONDAY.—Plumber in. Fine morning. Late for train. Raining hard when I returned from town, and blowing gale when I mounted bicycle at station. Found when I got home I had left breakfast sausages in railway carriage.

TUESDAY.—Plumber still in. Cæsar brought home by policeman who caught him killing neighbour's ducks—cost me three half-crowns to square—arrange matters, I mean. Walked to station. Very dark on return journey across heath, tripped over gorse bushes and cut knee of trousers.

WEDNESDAY.—Can't get plumber out. As not actually raining, started for station on bicycle; got half-way when top hat blew off, and passing motor simply obliterated it—had to buy new one immediately on arriving in town.

THURSDAY.—Plumber apparently one of the fixtures of house. Boy forgot to come and pump cistern full. Angela suggested that I should do it; I suggested Jane. Jane respectfully refused under threat of "spazzums." Confound the pump—burst two buttons off waistcoat and split frock-coat up back before I'd been five minutes at work.

FRIDAY.—Plumber evidently taken root. Evil-smelling tramp "begged" of me in very threatening manner on my return this evening across heath. Parted with a shilling; hardly optional under circumstances.

SATURDAY.—Plumber now breakfasts every morning with Jane. Took holiday—gardening and hedge-clipping; nailed one finger to wall; wind broke branch of elm-tree and blew it across front gate; greatly fear Cæsar has slain neighbour's cat; late in afternoon discovered Sunday's dinner had been forgotten; sallied forth on bicycle and returned with sirloin under my arm. Aunt Anne smiled approvingly and patted me on shoulder. Think that £400 a year pretty safe.

Angela and I had our first tiff on Sunday afternoon after two callers had left. I must say that with four people in it our drawing-room was somewhat uncomfortably crowded; still, I maintain that that was no excuse for the petulance displayed by Angela in saying:

"This is a horrid poky little room—there's not enough space to swing a cat in it!"

Now what an absurd thing to say! "How *do* you swing a cat?" I inquired, "and what earthly good could come of doing such a thing?"

But I looked up to discover that I was talking to the empty air; Angela had already quitted the room and we did not speak for quite an hour afterwards.

Gradually my wife's demands in the way of porterage grew more and more exacting until I was converted into a regular beast of burden on my way to and from the station. I wondered whether we could afford a small governess car and a donkey, but when I broached the subject, Angela flung her arms round my neck saying what a good old thing I was always to think of her comfort, but adding that she wanted no donkey whilst she had me. This sounded very affectionate, but I thought it might have been better expressed.

Why my dear wife should ordain that nearly all the provisions, fish, game, sausages, bacon, etc., should come from town, and be hauled across Togley Heath by my unwilling hands, I really could not see, and when, to these burdens, she added large square cardboard boxes containing certain mysterious articles of female wearing apparel, I felt rebellious enough to enter a mild protest.

"Couldn't we get all these things down here, my love?" I asked in casual tones.

"Now, Edward, don't be ridiculous," she replied. "You're just like a man——"

"I really can't see any reproach in that, my dear," I replied.

"I mean, it's just like a man to take the first he can get of anything—why, we should be poisoned if we ate the sausages, bacon, and other breakfast things bought from the village here. As for the dressmaker—I don't think you'd like to see your wife looking like a bundle of old rags!"

I hastened to assure her she was right in this latter supposition, and things went on as before. But when, in her gradual encroachment on the limits of my good nature, she actually suggested that as the woman had omitted to call for the washing on the previous day, I should take the clothes-basket under my arm on my way to the station, rebellious thoughts ripened into open mutiny, and I'd said I'd be shot if I would!

I must confess that about this time—midwinter—that walk across Togley Heath—for the roads were too muddy for bicycling—began to get on my nerves, and what had appeared as a health-giving exercise in the summer became a serious ordeal on winter nights, and especially in the frost, fog, or rain.

I constantly conjured up visions of a slip on the treacherous heath when the ground was frozen hard, and perhaps of lying there all night with a broken leg—or, worse still, falling a victim to some murderous garotter or evil-minded footpad, and when passing the cosy, red-curtained windows of The George Inn just before striking across the lonely heath; I often wished I could turn in

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at that hostelry and there put up for the night.

One evening in mid-January, about seven o'clock, my train slowly felt its way through the thick blinding curtain of fog into Togley Heath railway station. We had been delayed all the way down from London and were now over an hour late. I gathered my parcels together and stepped out on the platform. The next moment I sat down with awful velocity on the spot. The station-master came to my aid and I was quickly on my legs again. I thanked him, bade him good-night, and started off on my two-mile trudge.

I looked in vain for any of my fellow-passengers going in the same direction; apparently no one living on the far side of the heath had journeyed down by my train. On this night I felt peculiarly hampered by my parcels, and especially so by one of those confounded square cardboard boxes of Angela's which had been delivered during the late afternoon at my office.

This I carried under one arm. The other arm was around a large brown paper parcel; in my right hand I carried a fish basket and umbrella; in my left I had a pound of sausages and another fish basket containing bloaters and a haddock.

I passed the "George" with its cheery lighted windows; then, with a sigh, I resolutely turned my back upon civilisation, and struck into the footpath leading across Togley Heath.

After breathing the thick pea soup atmosphere of the City, the lesser density of the fog down here was a welcome change. Even so I had to do all I knew to keep the footpath. A quarter of the way across the heath I stopped to tie my bootlace, and as I did so I distinctly heard the soft padding of steps behind me; the sounds ceased, and then, with a feeling of cold water running down my spine, the padding recommenced and drew nearer. Was I being followed?

I hastily gathered up my parcels again and resumed my journey. This time it occurred to me that (as it was very cold) I should do well to trot instead of walk, and immediately the mysterious Feet behind me started trotting also! Laden as I was, my progress was a slow one and the Feet easily gained upon me. I took a fearful glance over my shoulder and there, just emerging from the blanket of fog, was the figure of a man apparently about nine feet long, though I daresay the fog magnified him a trifle. I walked on hurriedly.

In half-a-dozen strides he was beside me. Speaking in harsh, gruff tones he said:

"Good evening, sir; thick night, isn't it? Reg'lar place for a footpad or any of these highway robber chaps to pounce upon a man alone—for it *is* lonely on the heath in this fog. I think you and me had better walk together if you're bound for Togley village," and he laughed—unpleasantly it seemed to me.

I surveyed his monstrous bulk and silently calculated my chances in the event of a struggle. Instant flight would be—well, unmanly, of course. Still, from a strategic point of view, it was worth consideration.

"Oh," I replied jauntily, "I'm quite at home in fogs, and there is always the chance of foot passengers turning up at any minute."

The ogre gave an evil chuckle, and once again I experienced a frigidity about the region of the spine.

"I don' think you'll meet many people on Togley Heath to-night," rumbled the voice beside me. And so deep a meaning seemed to be imported into his tone that, as in a flash, my nerve failed me (I often act on the spur of the moment). I turned round and bolted on my own trail back in the direction of the hospitable portal of the "George."

Away went the sausages, hurtled the haddock through the air, away went the fish which should have formed part of our dinner; lost was the cheese, and, finally, the square cardboard box containing feminine fallals was left derelict, lying across the footpath.

The ogre bawled and shouted after me and then started in pursuit. Before he had got a dozen yards, I experienced a vast relief at hearing him trip and fall over Angela's box, and his language was powerful. Never looking back, I sped on, until, gasping for breath, I pulled up outside the "George," and, having partly recovered myself, I entered and secured a bed for the night. As Aunt Anne was staying with us my wife would not be lonely.

Next morning, remembering Angela's natural anxiety, I was up betimes and arrived home with the milk. Angela was sipping her morning cup of tea when I went into her room, and did not appear at all perturbed. There was nothing of the Edward-darling-thank-goodness-you-are-alive-and-safe air about her.

I felt rather hurt, and I am afraid was tempted to add just a little dash of colour to the description of my over-night adventure in order to extract her sympathy. I began

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by detailing the lateness of the train's arrival, my start across Togley Heath, braving the blinding fog, being accosted by a bloodthirsty ruffian of gigantic stature and truculent demeanour.

"Then, without any warning, he made a sudden attack upon me, this armed villain, and after bombarding him with sausages, the smoked haddock, the cheese, bacon, and other comestibles, and, finally, with your precious box"—here Angela smiled, and I, for some unknown reason, began to feel on rather unsafe ground—"I began to fall back, retreating steadily in the face of the enemy, until I arrived at the 'George,' where, with a snarl of disappointed rage, the bloodthirsty one sheered off and disappeared in the fog. I thought it politic to abandon my parcels, but, barring this, I sustained no other loss, and certainly consider I came off with the honours of war."

Again Angela smiled enigmatically.

"Well, dear, when the Inspector came last night, bringing in all your parcels, he told us quite a different story."

"Inspector—Inspector of what?" I broke in wonderingly.

"Inspector of Police," rejoined Angela calmly. "Inspector Bex. He was your bloodthirsty villain."

This was indeed a bolt from the blue.

His story was that he overtook, on a foggy heath, a nervous little gent (Phœbus! that I should have lived to be described by a policeman as "a nervous little gent"), laden with parcels; that his—the Inspector's—offer to accompany him was apparently misconstrued, and that, after walking a few yards together, the nervous gent dropped his parcels and fled back to the "George!" The Inspector called after him vainly; then he lit his lantern, by the light of which he found the abandoned parcels, read the address on one of them, and so was guided to "The Retreat."

No wonder Angela was not anxious about my safety when I did not arrive home that night!

I had to admit that there were slight discrepancies between the two stories, as, for instance, that the police Inspector was *not* a bloodthirsty ruffian and that possibly he was *not* nine feet high. But, after all, why split hairs, or quarrel over matters of detail?

From that moment, Chief Inspector Bex seemed to be the (inn) spectre who was destined to haunt me, and mine. On one excuse or another, his burly form might have been seen at "The Retreat" at least twice or three times a week, under the pretence of looking after our safety.

One day he had remarked to me that he considered my Aunt Anne an extremely fine woman, and a day or two afterwards Aunt Anne had giggled consciously when the name of Chief Inspector Bex was announced, for the third time that week; but when they shyly proclaimed that they were shortly about to be married, both Angela and I felt—and, I dare say, looked—as though a thunderbolt had dropped from a clear blue sky.

A month later they were married at the Parish Church, and the Chief Inspector, on the strength of having secured Aunt Anne and her fortune, was inclined to chuckle at his triumph over me. But knowledge is power, and, fortified by a visit to Somerset House (Wills Department), I was able to get back on Mr. Bex with a neat counter. Just before bride and bridegroom started for the honeymoon, the Chief Inspector, smiling in a superior manner, said to me:

"Sorry to put your nose out of joint, but business is business, and your aunt's £400 a year is a very useful income."

It was then that he met his Waterloo.

"Yes," I drawled indifferently. "Pity you won't get the benefit of it; the whole of it, you see, is forfeited on re-marriage, by the terms of her late husband's will!"

ON THE CONTRARY!

"Fate blocks the pathway once again
That unto Fortune led!"
So Algy railed: "It's very plain
I have no luck!" he said.

But one who overheard said "No!
It really seems to me,
Your luck is most abundant, though
It's bad as bad can be"

R. Mertun.

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A FISTIC AFFAIR.

"Black eyes and sanguinary noses,
Oft strew the path of love."

By J. P. Loughnan.

Micky Gollagher told me this so you ought to believe it.

The season was summer when Martin Mahony first visited the Portwestland district, and so cast eyes upon the beautiful Miss Green. He was introduced to her at a tennis tournament, and met her again on the following evening at a dance. How many times they waltzed or sat out together is uncertain, but somewhere round one o'clock in the morning Martin found himself confronted by young Jimmy Doran, the local doctor, purple with wrath.

"You seem interested in Miss Green, sir," remarked Jimmy in tones of withering sarcasm.

"And what's that got to do with you, anyway?" returned Martin cheerfully.

"Miss Green has already cut three of her dances with me," announced Mr. Doran.

"I don't blame her either," retorted Mahony.

"Sir," growled the infuriated James, "if you dance any more with Miss Green I will break your infernal neck for you."

"Bow-wow," said Mahony.

Doran, who was by this time showing signs of spontaneous combustion, took several seconds to collect his voice. Then, pointing dramatically to a little door behind them, he said:

"There is a garden outside. Perhaps you'll come along there."

Mahony at once fell into step, and a couple of seconds later they were dodging round one another between the flower beds, under the light of a cheerful moon.

Unfortunately for himself, Mahony knew nothing about the fistic art, and so it was that during the course of the next ten minutes he received, amongst other punches, a couple of black eyes and a blow on the point that sent him crashing back against a stone flower-vase, and finished the fight.

Doran attended to his fallen foe's injuries, and then helped him back to the refreshment room. "Don't dance with Miss Green any more," was his final advice. But Mahony only answered, "Don't be silly!"

Next day Portwestland society was interested to see Mr. Martin Mahony and Miss Green playing golf together, but, of course, nobody knew what they were discussing.

"They are saying you fought Jimmy Doran last night. Is it true?" demanded Miss Green severely.

"If I can believe the evidence of my own eyes, it is," Martin admitted.

"And what were you fighting over, pray?"

"Three cut dances, as far as I can gather."

Peggy Green blushed.

"I will never speak to Jimmy again," she declared.

"Capital!" exclaimed Martin. "Then I have not bled in vain."

"Did you—er—bleed much?"

"Rivers—oceans!" said Martin. "Doran is a great fighting man."

"I am disgusted," remaked Peggy.

"So will Doran be when you cut him," responded Mahony cheerfully.

They finished their round, and in due course Mahony found himself back at the hotel near the golf links. It was unfortunate that he should have repaired to the bar just then in pursuit of a sherry and bitters. He happened to come in just at the point of the story, as told by Fred Whelen. "And Doran knocked him out in next to no time, although he is so big," Whelen was saying. "He's a poor sort of a fellow, this Mahony, I tell you, and not worthy to carry Peggy's train."

Mahony came across to the speaker, grinning amiably.

"The last part of that's all right," he said, "but don't you be so free with your 'poor fellows,' d'ye hear?" And he gave Whelen a

["A FISTIC AFFAIR" continued overleaf.

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smart slap across the face with his open hand.

Well, there was just time before the luncheon gong, and there's a nice stretch of turf in the hotel gardens at Portwestland. Whelen did not take quite so long over the job as Doran had, and nobody was late for luncheon except Mahony, who naturally had to bathe his nose. The story travelled round the whole district before tea-time.

It was at the tennis club on the following afternoon that Martin next met Peggy. He was as imperturbable as ever, but Miss Green's eyes were flashing.

"This has got to stop," she told him. "You're making us both a laughing-stock in the neighbourhood."

"That's true," he admitted, "and, what's more, the performance has only just begun. I can see a smile which needs my attention in the eyes of several men"

"Well, you're not to fight any more," commanded Peggy.

"Must," said Mahony.

"Then I'll go away and leave you to make a fool of yourself alone."

Mahony looked at her pensively. "That would be lonely work," he said. "Better let me come, too. Let's make an elopement of it."

"Certainly not," said Peggy.

"Tell you what," went on Mahony, warming to the proposal, "if you'd meet me at the cross-roads beyond the golf-links to-night, I'd have the car there, and we'd run straight up to Belfast, get married to-morrow, come back here next day, and have the laugh of them all. A fine idea that, Miss Green. What do you say?"

But Peggy also seemed to be thinking out some idea of her own, and her eyes twinkled with sudden inspiration as she replied:

"What time will you be at the cross-roads?"

He thought a moment.

"Let's see, it's fairly dark by 9.30, and we don't want to attract attention, so let's say half-past nine."

She emphasised her words with a raised forefinger.

"Now listen," she exclaimed. "As soon as you pull up at the cross-roads to-night, a girl covered up in a shawl will step out from the roadside and enter your car——"

"Yourself!" grinned Mahony.

"Directly she has got in, drive away, without any chatter, until you're clear of Portwestland. Don't speak or stop until you reach Ballinahaugh. Then do what I tell you. Will you promise me this?"

"Rather!" he cried with enthusiasm.

"Very well, then, that's agreed. But not a word this side of Ballinahaugh, remember!"

Soon afterwards Peggy hurried off to the little post-office, where she dispatched a telegram before going home.

For the remainder of the afternoon she was exceptionally busy.

II.

A boisterous wind from the west came hustling through the darkness.

Suddenly, above the hissing of the wind, came the hum of an approaching motor-car, and a dark figure that had been huddled up against the wall started into an attitude of attention.

With the jar and creaking of brakes, the great machine now came to a halt at the juncture of the roads, and immediately afterwards the figure by the wall ran forward and leapt lightly into a seat behind the driver, who, without speaking, restarted his car.

It was with a feeling of supreme triumph that Mr. Martin Mahony drove away from Portwestland that night. More than once a wild desire to speak descended upon him, but then he remembered how emphatic Peggy had been on this point, and so he waited until a bunch of irregular blots against the night sky ahead told him that they were approaching the little town of Ballinahaugh.

When the buildings presently became more definitely visible he pulled up with a sigh of relief, and turned round impulsively to the girl behind.

"Darling," he whispered, "come and sit beside me, for now we're well clear of Portwestland."

A ripple of subdued laughter answered him as the figure on the back seat leant forward, disclosing the face of a girl whom he had never before seen in his life.

"Good heavens! Who in the world are you?" gasped the astounded Mahony.

"My name is Ellen Gollagher, sir," replied the maiden demurely.

"But why are you here?" asked Martin.

"Because Miss Green told me to come, sir."

"The deuce she did! And what else did she tell you to do, may I ask?"

"Just to give you this letter, sir, that was all. She said you'd understand when you'd read the letter."

She handed him an envelope as she spoke, and by the light of the head-lamps Mahony carefully read through the closely written sheet, which explained to him exactly what

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Miss Green's plans were with regard to his immediate future. When he had finished reading, Mahony slowly re-folded the paper, while a broad grin gradually spread over the length and breadth of his amiable features.

He climbed back into the driver's seat, still smiling.

"That's quite all right," he remarked. "Now tell me which is the way, and we'll be there in next to no time."

"Take the first turning on the left, sir, and drive on till you see a house away back off the road on your right," replied Ellen Gollagher.

And Mahony drove on, still smiling thoughtfully.

III.

The sudden disappearance of Martin Mahony from Portwestland afforded great satisfaction to Jimmy Doran and other young men whose hearts were the exclusive property of Peggy Green. It was noted, with considerable pleasure, by these gentlemen, that the absence of Mahony did not appear to depress the fair Miss Green in the very least, although, on the other hand, she never gave any one of them the decided encouragement for which they yearned so ardently.

Now that he had gone, a crop of splendid "Mahony stories" sprang into being, and were retailed, with great gusto, upon every suitable occasion. The battles which Mahony was supposed to have fought became Homeric affairs, backed by such circumstantial evidence that you simply had to believe in them.

For instance, a chip in the stone flower vase, against which he had fallen when fighting Doran, was pointed out solemnly to newcomers, with the simple, but expressive explanation:

"That's where Mahony fell. He had a great head on him, that fellow, to be able to chip the stone like that and scarcely to feel it afterwards!"

While Whelen, who put his thumb out repairing a motor, was always careful to attribute it to the terrible blow with which he had knocked out the absent one.

Thus four fable-laden weeks flew by, and then Portwestland was roused to a fever of fresh wonderment.

Martin Mahony, as large as life, appeared at the tennis club in company with Miss Peggy Green.

Doran and his friends were furious. They swore bloodthirsty oaths that they would knock their old enemy limb from limb, while visitors on holiday, who had never seen him before, gazed furtively at this modern hero of warlike romance.

But Mahony appeared to be oblivious of the fact that he was attracting so much attention. He just resumed the pleasant round of holiday life, as lived at Portwestland, while his rivals awaited an opportunity of inflicting some final defeat upon him.

This was the state of affairs when Peggy's mother gave a picnic in the woods above Portwestland town, to which, as a matter of course, she invited most of the young men in the neighbourhood.

After tea the company broke up into small groups, and scattered in various directions through the woodlands. Mahony sought out Miss Green. So did Jimmy Doran, and, as neither man seemed inclined to give way, the three of them set out for a stroll together.

The conversation was not brisk, as Doran was wholly occupied in glaring at Mahony, and Mahony's eyes were all for Peggy.

"How pretty the water sounds, dropping into the pool below the falls," remarked Peggy serenely, and without addressing either of her escort in particular.

"It does, indeed," said Doran; "and it's a pretty sight, too, that waterfall, a sight every visitor should see," he added, with a meaning glance at Mahony.

"I must go there some time," murmured that individual lazily.

"Go straight through that brake, and turn to the left, and you're there," rapped out Doran.

"I'm not going there now," said Mahony.

"Did you ever hear that two's company and three's none?" barked Doran.

"Of course. That's why I'd recommend you to go and look at the waterfall," replied Mahony.

Doran ground his teeth. "If Miss Green was not here!" he growled.

"You had better both go and look at the waterfall," suggested Peggy.

"We will!" they cried in chorus.

Peggy sat down on a mossy bank, and watched them disappear, with a smile of amusement on her face. Her eyes were on her wrist watch, and she ticked off the seconds with unusual attention.

At the end of the seventy-fifth second the swish of a branch below her distracted her attention from the watch, and she raised her eyes. Mahony was strolling jauntily towards her, his hands in the pockets of his coat.

"Seventy-five seconds," she said.

["A FISTIC AFFAIR" continued overleaf.]

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"Deduct ten to cover my climb up here from the falls," he replied, as they strolled off together.

IV.

"Why isn't Doran on the links this morning?" inquired Major Clark, handing his clubs to a caddie.

"He met with a motor accident yesterday, and damaged his face," explained Whelen.

Mahony, standing near, laughed.

"That be hanged for a yarn," he said.

Whelen looked at him truculently. "What d'ye mean?" he demanded.

"I mean Doran was in no motor accident yesterday."

"Then how did he get his face damaged?"

"I punched his head for him," returned Mahony.

A shout of laughter greeted this remark, and then all eyes were turned on Whelen.

"Then I'm a liar when I say Doran met with a motor accident, am I?" he inquired.

"You're a fool to believe the yarn," chuckled Mahony.

"Fool, am I?" cried Whelen. "Come round behind the club-house, and I'll give you fool pretty quick!"

The whole party adjourned to the back of the club-house, where a pleasant stretch of turf seemed to have been laid down specially for their purpose. Then Whelen, winking at the spectators, placed himself in front of the imperturbable Mahony.

For those who had heard tales of Mahony's deplorable ignorance of the noble art his movements came as a distinct surprise. He squared up to his opponent in the most businesslike way imaginable, and when Whelen rushed in, with a terrific right and left, Mahony merely side-stepped, to place a delightful blow under the ear, which sent the other rolling like a ninepin over the grass.

Scarcely able to credit the evidence of their eyes, spectators saw the infuriated Whelen charge again—only to be met by a straight right to the nose. Then Mahony varied the proceedings with some elegant footwork. He fairly danced round his bewildered adversary, planting blows upon every portion of the anatomy which it is permissible to strike under Queensberry rules.

He jabbed and upper-cut the wretched Whelen until that gentleman, half-blind and quite breathless, presented a truly pitiable spectacle. Then, with a neat left from the shoulder, Mahony concluded the performance.

Five minutes later Whelen was sitting up again.

"What's it mean?" he inquired unsteadily, with the remains of his eyes fixed on Mahony.

"It means," replied Martin affably, "that I've spent the last four weeks at Ballinahaugh, learning to fight with Micky Gollagher, the Irish heavy-weight champion. It also means gentlemen, that if there is anyone else in this district who wants to quarrel with me I am entirely at his disposal. Shake hands, Whelen, and let's get on with our golf."

V.

Peggy was reading in a hammock at the end of the garden when Martin found her that same evening.

"Well?" she said, looking up at him from under drooping lashes.

"I rather fancy Whelen worked out at something like two and three-quarter minutes," he told her.

"And you explained the position?"

"Yes, they know about Micky Gollagher now, and my fighting days are over."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"The remainder of my life I propose to devote to more delightful occupations," announced Mahony, with great deliberation.

"You will go motoring, I suppose."

"Motoring is a lonely recreation."

"Well, the shooting season will soon be here."

"I am not thinking of sport, Miss Green."

"Don't pretend to be so serious. It doesn't suit you."

"I'm not pretending," said Mahony.

Peggy fidgeted with her book, which fell to the ground. Martin dived for it, but it happened that his hand met hers before either touched the straying volume.

"Peggy," he murmured, "I want you to make a great sacrifice, in the interests of the Portwestland district."

"And what may that be, I wonder?"

"Well, all the men are in love with you, and, after what has just happened, they will be dashing off to get lessons in boxing from Micky Gollagher. You, who love peace, will be the means of drenching Portwestland with the blood of your admirers, unless you do the one thing that will prevent such a catastrophe."

"And—what is that?" asked Peggy, with unusual hesitation.

"You must marry me!" declared Mahony, with decision, and, bending low, he kissed her before she had time to answer.

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

At all the city termini
Once saw a solid jam
Of people fierce and firm in eye,
Who left for France or Germany,
Southampton or Siam.

The Editor he blesses you
As, merrily, you play,
And hopes no pang distresses you
To think, while he addresses you,
He gets no holiday.

THE £260 STORY COMPETITION RESULT.

At last you may look up, like little Wilhelmine, with wonder-waking eyes, and see who are the lucky winners in the Story Competition.

Here is the official list:

Winner of the £50 Prize—PEARSON'S MAGAZINE:
Miss Violet Methley, 9 Royal York Crescent, Clifton, Bristol.

Winner of the £50 Prize—ROYAL MAGAZINE:
T. P. Cameron Wilson, Esq., Mount Arlington, Hindhead.

Winner of the £50 Prize—NOVEL MAGAZINE:
Sydney G. Campbell, Esq., 23 Wolseley Road, Wealdstone, Middlesex.

Winner of the £10 Prize for the Best Story in the first 500 entries:
Captain H. J. Jones, c.o. Sir C. R. McGrigor, Bart., 25 Charles Street, St. James' Square, W.C.

Winners of the £10 Prizes:

Mrs. Beveridge, Schoonnicht, Bloemhof, Transvaal, S.A.; Miss Desèmea Wilson, "Ecclesbourne," Wallingford-on-Thames, Berks; Granville Fortescue, Esq., Ballencrieff, Sunningdale, Berks; Miss Maisie Bundack, 4 West Hill, Highgate, N.; Mrs. Carey Morris, The Writers' Club, 10 Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C.; H. Allan Grant, Esq., British Club, National Hotel, Moscow, Russia; Lieut. Evelyn Aldridge, R.N., Milton Hill, Weston-super-Mare, Som.; J. C. K. Peterson, Esq., c.o. Miss Margaret Peterson, c.o. Grindlay & Co., 54 Parliament Street, S.W.; Courtenay Lennox, Esq. 21 University Mansions, Putney, S.W.; Miss E. M. Gully, 48 Bembridge Crescent, Southsea, Hants.

To each and all of these talented and fortunate writers may I extend my hearty congratulations?

OUR £1000 COMPETITION,

particulars of which appear on p. 313 of this number, is passing all bounds in its widespread popularity. The oldest inhabitant and the babbling babe, the keen-faced young men with dents in their chins like those of magazine-story heroes, and the proud young married women, the slender, incomparable flappers, and the dizzy nuts, all pore relentlessly over the cryptic pictures.

Pore things! (excuse me) they have certainly one or two curly ones up against them. But never mind. Think of the bedding-out plants—the wanton geraniums and the brazen tulips—you will be able to have next spring if you win the first prize. Personally I should visit Araby and Kashmir, places I have often longed to see, but, then, I am barred. That's the worst of being an editor—or one of the many worsts, rather.

MISS GLADYS COOPER'S F.A.F. APPEAL

in the June ROYAL has been responded to generously. She wishes me to thank the following, who have kindly sent subscriptions, and may I add my own thanks on behalf of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE:

Rummage Sale at Inthlabati, per Miss Smuts, £3; A. M. Aldridge, £1 1s.; Marjorie and Joan Emmerson, 10s.; J. Wilson, £1; H. C. T. Rice, £1; R. P. Edward, 1s.; Mrs. Goodwin, 5s.; M. Lee, 9d.; E. Cadbury, £2. 2s.; D. Williams, 10s; Anon., 10s.; Mrs. Hickman, £2; Anonymous, £1 1s.; Col. Edis, £2; D. Taylor, £1; Miss Back, 4s. 6d.; Birmingham, 1s. 6d.; C. Taylor, £1 1s.; Anon., 9d.; K. and E. Edwards, 6s.; Sub.-Lieut., 11s.; Anon., 1s.; Mrs. Lawrence, 10s.; Anon., 5s. 6d.; Lieut.-Col. J. Graham, £1; L. Dudding, £1; Stamps, 1s.; Anon., 10s.; May Edwards, 9d.; Miss Pitcher, 1s. 6d.; C. W. Stanley, £1 10s.; A. C. Milledge, £1; "B.," £1. *Collected:* Bedford College Musical Society, £3 2s. 6d.; F. H. and J. Richardson, 12s.

Also, may I remind you that Miss Cooper has generously offered to present subscribers of £1 and upwards with a charming signed portrait of herself? One of these beautiful photographs constitutes a unique souvenir of a kind action. Will you please address all subscriptions to the Secretary, F.A.F., care of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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